

THE PROJECT OF SPECULATIVE THINKING
IN HEGEL'S PHILOSOPHY

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This dissertation makes a contribution towards understanding Hegel's enigmatic conception of philosophy as system in which form and content are one and thinking rises to the divine perspective. I argue for the following interpretive view. We can understand an important part of what motivates Hegel's conception of philosophy by attending to a project in Plato's middle dialogues which demands that philosophy be a science of the Good (understood as the principle of all things). The *Meno*, *Phaedo*, *Republic*, and *Parmenides* develop a conception of philosophy as the journey towards a knowledge that is absolute and comprehensive, rational and teleological. (Such a knowledge cannot be construed as a species of belief.) Hegel transforms this Platonic project into a demand for a fully 'concrete' thinking. The least inadequate expression of what this is, outside of philosophy in its true form (which Hegel calls 'speculative'), demands the categories of religious representation in which the truth is thought of as a divine going forth and return to self, an activity of self-determining and knowing which has the structure of self-consciousness. The dialectic is best understood as a journey which ends in the (self-)discovery that in true philosophy we are this divine return - a kind of recollection which completes Plato's project of a science of the Good. The system, if complete, will just *be* our thinking in which we are no longer only *referring* to the content which is the truth, but are simply that content thinking itself. This is what concrete thinking is. In the Preface to the

Phenomenology of Spirit Hegel invites us to enter into a process which will reveal itself to be this concrete thinking that the Platonic project, as transformed by Hegel, has demanded. We are presented with two related aims of speculative thinking: to be free of anything that is pre-philosophical and to be complete by being self-justifying. Paralleling Descartes, the invitation takes the form of developing a deep enough skepticism about more ordinary forms of argument that we are open to discovering what the dialectic will reveal. Hegel's argument that the family is an ethical institution is one moment in that dialectic. I interpret this as presenting us with a compelling view of love which could not be adequately expressed if we were to re-construct it in such a way as to avoid Hegel's conception of philosophy.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Lawrence Bruce-Robertson received a B.A. (1985) in philosophy from the University of Toronto and an M.D. (1990) from the College of Physicians and Surgeons, Columbia University, following this with training in internal medicine at Mt. Sinai hospital in New York city. He returned to the study of philosophy, earning an M.A. (1998) in Classics from Dalhousie University, and an M.A. (2006) and Ph.D. (2014) in philosophy from Cornell University. In August 2013 he took up the position of assistant professor in the Humanities at Grenfell Campus, Memorial University, Newfoundland, Canada.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my father, whose example of a life well-lived will always stand before me as an example to follow.

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I would like to thank my parents, Dr. Alan Bruce-Robertson and Kathleen McCormick Bruce-Robertson, for their unconditional love and untiring support over the course of my unconventional trajectory. My father died before I began my graduate work at Cornell and my mother's continued support at a time when her own life was not easy is a noble example for me. I would like to thank my wife, Jane, and our children, Julia, Caroline and William, for their love, their patience, their inspiration and the joy they bring to my life. I would like to thank Fred Neuhouser, Andrew Chignell and Dick Boyd for their generous spirit of philosophical friendship during my time at Cornell. I would like to thank the Sage School of Philosophy and the Graduate School at Cornell for their support, which included a Sage Fellowship and teaching support, but went well beyond these. Some of the material in this dissertation began as papers written for Gail Fine and Fred Neuhouser. I am grateful for their comments on those early attempts to work out my own interpretive and philosophical position. Parts of chapters three and four were presented to the department workshop of the Sage School of Philosophy and I received much helpful feedback from the students and faculty who attended. An early version of chapter three was presented to a colloquium on "The Labor of the Concept," hosted by the Department of German Studies at Cornell. I am grateful to the organizers, Peter Gilgen and Andrew Chignell, for the invitation to present my research, and to the participants for their helpful responses. An early version of chapter four was presented to a graduate student conference, "Encountering Hegel," at Boston College and the lively discussion which ensued helped me to think about the

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

- EL: *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften*, Vol. I. (1817, rev. 1827, 1830). In Hegel, *Werke*, VIII. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1986.
In English: *The Encyclopaedia Logic*. Trans. T. F. Geraets, W. A. Suchting, and H. S. Harris Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Co., 1991.
- Enc, III: *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften*, Vol. III. (1817, rev. 1827, 1830). In Hegel, *Werke*, X. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1986.
In English: *Hegel's Philosophy of Mind*. Trans. by William Wallace and A.V. Miller Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971.
- Encyclopedia* This is used to refer to Hegel's *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften*, Vol. I-III as a whole (1817, rev. 1827, 1830). In Hegel, *Werke*, VIII-X. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1986.
- Introduction, HP: "Introduction to the History of Philosophy." In G. W. F. Hegel, *Hegel's Idea of Philosophy*, trans. and essay by Quentin Lauer. New York: Fordham University Press, 1983.
- LHP: *Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie* I-III. In Hegel, *Werke*, XVIII-XX. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1986.
In English: *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*. Vols. I-III. Trans. E.S. Haldane and F.H. Simpson. New York: The Humanities Press, 1974.
- LPR: *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion. Vol. III*. Trans. R. F. Brown, P. C. Hodgson, and J. M. Stewart, with the assistance of H. S. Harris. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985.
- PhG/*Phenomenology*: *Phänomenologie des Geistes. Philosophische Bibliothek Band 414*. Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1988.
In English: *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Trans. A. V. Miller. Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1977.
- PR: *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts*. In Hegel, *Werke*, VII. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1986.
In English: *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*. Trans. H.B. Nisbet. Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1998.
- WL/*Logic*: *Wissenschaft der Logik*, I-II. Ed. Georg Lasson. Hamburg: Felix Meiner,

1963.

In English: *Hegel's Science of Logic*. Trans. A. V. Miller. New York: Humanity Books, 1998.

Where appropriate Hegel's texts are cited by paragraph (§) number. Hegel's published remarks (*Anmerkungen*) are indicated by an 'R.' Additions (*Zusätze*), Hegel's oral extrapolations in lectures, included by his editors and based on student notes, are indicated by an 'A.' When there are multiple additions to a paragraph these are numbered as 'A1' etc. Aristotle's *Metaphysics* and *Physics* are cited using the Greek letter for the book, followed by the Roman numeral for the chapter (and Bekker pagination when appropriate). Aristotle's *Nichomachean Ethics* and *De Anima* are cited using Roman numerals for the Book number followed by Arabic numbers for the chapter (and Bekker pagination where appropriate). I refer to Aristotle's works by their usual names (*Metaphysics*, *Physics*, *Nichomachean Ethics*, *De Anima*) but when citing them I use the Latin titles under which they are published. Following current convention I give page numbers without any preceding abbreviation, but where there might be some confusion (as in a work where most citations are by paragraph number, but some must be by page) I use 'p.' for page to ensure clarity.

Preface

The central question that has motivated this dissertation is the question whether we must radically re-construct Hegel's form of argument in order to discover some sense in it. This has a closely related question: must we set aside the central place that the divine, what Hegel at times calls the 'true infinite' or the 'absolute,' has in his argument in order to find a philosophically relevant or even philosophically intelligible position? These are intimately related questions because of a central idea in Hegel's work - his claim that there is a necessary unity of form and content in philosophy. We could state these questions as one by asking the following question: can we make sense of Hegel's claim that philosophy, to be true philosophy, must take on, or rise to, the divine perspective? This is a startling and enigmatic conception of what philosophy is. The goal of this dissertation is to make a contribution towards understanding it.

It is common (and I would add entirely reasonable, given the immediate obscurity of Hegel's writing) for interpreters to set both the speculative and the divine aspects of Hegel's work aside, though they do so for different reasons. At one extreme, an interpreter like Allen Wood thinks that we must begin any philosophical appreciation of Hegel's views with an outright rejection of his claims to 'speculative' thinking (or 'speculative' argument - for Hegel these are the same, or so I will argue). Wood writes: "Viewed from a late twentieth-century perspective, it is evident that Hegel totally failed in his attempt to canonize speculative logic as the only proper

form of philosophical thinking."¹ Hence for Wood we must excise the very form of argument which Hegel thinks is necessary for his views to be justified. "To read Hegel in this way is, admittedly, to read him in some measure against his own self-understanding; it is nevertheless the only way in which most of us, if we are honest with ourselves, can read him seriously at all."² I do not disagree with this approach as one way of reflecting on ethical matters - indeed I think we can learn much from the way in which Wood recasts Hegel's ideas and reconstructs Hegel's arguments in a form more immediately intelligible to us. I *do*, however, disagree that Wood is justified in claiming that this is the *only* way in which we can engage philosophically with Hegel. A more cautious approach is found in Frederick Neuhouser's *Foundations of Hegel's Social Theory*. Unlike Wood, Neuhouser does not begin (and does not think we need to begin) with an assessment of Hegel's view about the nature of philosophy and the metaphysics which goes along with it. His choice to remain agnostic about Hegel's larger systematic argument is based on two judgments. First, he judges that it turns out that we can abstract Hegel's argument of the *Elements of the Philosophy of Right* from the larger systematic argument and still have a compelling social theory which articulates the norms Hegel presents as determining a social order to be rational, which is to say, good. Second, he judges that even if our aim were to understand the larger systematic argument, the more modest account is an appropriate first step

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1. Allen Wood, *Hegel's Ethical Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 4.
 2. *Ibid.*, 8.

to take.³ Klaus Hartmann has different reasons for setting aside Hegel's metaphysics.⁴ He begins from the assumption that Kant has shown metaphysics (at least as traditionally understood, and in particular any kind of philosophical theology) to be beyond the scope of philosophy, and he argues that we can read Hegel, to a very large extent, as not being involved in metaphysics.⁵ So

3. Neuhauser qualifies his approach as follows:

[my] book's aim is neither to examine the deepest metaphysical foundations of Hegel's social theory nor to reconstruct the Phenomenology's meta-justification of the social and political norms Hegel thinks are authoritative for the modern era ... The choice to adopt this more modest approach to Hegel's social theory is not based on a studied conviction that the two alternative projects would be philosophically unrewarding (for such a conclusion would be warranted only on the basis of exhaustive attempts to reconstruct and defend the positions of the Logic and Phenomenology) (*Foundations of Hegel's Social Theory: Actualizing Freedom* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000), 2-3).

That is, any judgment about Hegel's conception of philosophy would be premature without such exhaustive attempts.

4. Klaus Hartmann, "Hegel: a Non-Metaphysical View," in Alasdair MacIntyre, *Hegel: a collection of Critical Essays* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1972), 101-124.
5. He does think this reading is not possible in some works, namely, the *Elements of the Philosophy of Right* and Hegel's lectures on the philosophy of history, aesthetics, and religion. In these works Hartmann judges Hegel to have over-stepped his own self-imposed limits (*Ibid.*, 114, 118-124). In a later essay, written for J.N. Findlay's *Festschrift*, Hartmann admits to some reservation about being able to maintain a non-metaphysical reading of Hegel's *Encyclopedia* when the category of spirit emerges. This leads him to conclude that there are metaphysical and non-metaphysical strands which are at odds (Klaus Hartmann, "Do Philosophers Need an Absolute, and Which One?" in *Studies in the Philosophy of J. N. Findlay*, Robert S. Cohen, Richard M. Martin, and Merold Westphal, eds. (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1985), 276-293). Hartmann divides Hegel's works into 'systematic' works and 'non-systematic' works according as they are (or can be read as) categorial (non-metaphysical) or not, thus denying Hegel's claim that the system as found in speculative logic is also found in the history of philosophy, only in a

understood, this re-constructed Hegel is seen as reflecting on the categories we use (and their relations to each other) in order to attain a systematically integrated view such that we obtain, or reason obtains, the greatest satisfaction in conceiving ourselves and our world. In this approach Hegel should be read as not making any existence claims and also should be read as presenting a view which could not be revolutionary, for Hegel is essentially taking what is already given and only re-constructing our conception of this.⁶ Hartmann's approach has inspired a rich and varied line of interpretation in the work of philosophers such as Robert Pippin, Terry Pinkard, Paul Reading, and Robert Stern (in his earlier work on the *Phenomenology of Spirit*).⁷ More recently

different form (cf., for example, EL, §14).

6. Hartmann uses the term 'categorical' for this kind of reading. In Hartmann's terminology, to speak of Hegel as involved in a 'categorical' project means that Hegel is not concerned with what is, but with our (rational and so systematic) re-construction of what is (a re-construction in categories, which are thought's most satisfying object, since completely transparent to it). I might seem to be misrepresenting Hartmann's reading of Hegel by speaking of it itself as a re-construction, since Hartmann thinks we can read Hegel without seeing Hegel as making metaphysical claims (at least in Hegel's central works). Is Hartmann then, not simply making a claim about what is the case with respect to Hegel's argument? It turns out, I think, to be entirely fair to speak of his interpretation as a re-construction, for whether his reading is 'true' or not is not really a question he poses or is interested in. What is of interest to him is whether it is a satisfying reading. That is, the categorical reading he gives of Hegel's work applies to his own interpretation as well (not surprisingly, because he thinks that is what good philosophical work consists in), and Hartmann's point is that a categorical reading is a re-construction. In Hartmann's case, the 'given' that is in need of rational re-construction is Hegel's texts.
7. Stern, for example, takes Hegel to be involved in a kind of philosophical therapy (which he relates to the projects of Wittgenstein and Austin, though without the intention of returning us to ordinary language or common sense) (R. Stern, *Hegel and the Phenomenology of Spirit* (London: Routledge, 2002), 17). This project Stern describes as follows:

Hegel sees that the role of philosophy is to lead ordinary consciousness away from the oppositional thinking of the understanding, in order to overcome the kind of conceptual tensions that make the world appear less

attempts have been made by philosophers such as Robert Stern (in his later work, *Hegelian Metaphysics*) and James Kreines to see in Hegel's philosophy the basis for a scaled-down metaphysics which focuses on arguing for the fundamental conceptual structure of reality.⁸

than fully intelligible to us: once this is achieved, we will overcome the intellectual and practical difficulties that have arisen because we do not look at the world rationally, at which point the world will look back at us in a rational manner (*ibid.*, 12).

For interpretations of Hegel which I am describing as inspired by the work of Klaus Hartmann cf. Robert Pippin, *Hegel's Idealism: The Satisfaction of Self-Consciousness* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989); Terry Pinkard, *Hegel's Dialectic: the Explanation of Possibility* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1988) and *Hegel's Phenomenology: The Sociality of Reason* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994); and Paul Redding, *Hegel's Hermeneutics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996) and *Analytic Philosophy and the Return of Hegelian Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007). These interpreters do not by any means present a homogeneous view, but they have what might be termed a family resemblance. Pinkard, for instance, has come to question whether the designation 'non-metaphysical' reading is really appropriate, and offers instead 'post-Kantian' in "Virtues, Morality and Sittlichkeit: From Maxims to Practices," *European Journal of Philosophy* 7, no. 2 (1999): 230, n.2. The idea is to stress that this is a reading of Hegel in which Hegel is seen as taking on Kant's project of critique, rather than simply dismissing it or attempting to overturn it. An aspect of Hartmann's account which becomes stressed and developed much more fully in this group of interpreters is what Pinkard terms the 'sociality' of reason. This is seen as one of Hegel's most important contributions to the project of taking on and developing Kantian critique.

8. Robert Stern, *Hegelian Metaphysics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009). James Kreines, "Hegel: Metaphysics without Pre-Critical Monism," *Bulletin of the Hegel Society of Great Britain* 57/58 (2008): 48-70. In 'Hegel's Metaphysics: Changing the Debate,' *Philosophy Compass* 1, no. 5 (2006): 466-480, Kreines argues that one cannot avoid metaphysics in Hegel (however one interprets Hegel, one will find him giving substantive answers to questions that pre-Kantian metaphysicians asked), but that even the 'non-metaphysical' interpreters should not really think that they should, by their own lights, be trying to avoid it or even understand themselves to have avoided it in their re-constructions. He presents a case for the following claims: "Traditionalists [readers of Hegel who do not excise the metaphysics] see Hegel as aspiring to surpass or get beyond [the limits Kant sets to knowledge] ... Nontraditionalists [following Hartmann], by contrast, see Hegel as aspiring not to surpass but to eliminate Kant's limits, or to erase those limits from within"

These diverse re-constructions of Hegel have proven to be fruitful in the sense that they have led to the laying out of philosophical positions that are immediately accessible to us, and readily integrated into contemporary philosophical debates in analytic philosophy.⁹

The success of such interpretations is grounds for claiming that it is reasonable to set aside the speculative and divine in Hegel. So what benefit is to be derived from addressing the question whether it is *necessary* to re-construct Hegel's work in terms alien to his own? The question is important, for if Hegel is right, then other forms of philosophizing cannot hope to *fully* comprehend the content of his system. That system is, according to Hegel, the true form of philosophy. Now, that system may not have the content that Hegel thinks it has. Perhaps he is trying to think the unthinkable. But how are we to judge that? If we do so by first re-constructing his thought into categories and a form of argument alien to his own, then we have already presupposed that Hegel is wrong, for it is a central claim of his that he has discovered the only adequate form of expressing the truth. Hegel understood his own philosophy (or more precisely, what he claimed to be just philosophy itself in its developed form) to be capable of

(*ibid.*, 469-70). Both these groups should, Kreines argues, accept that Hegel is seeking "to establish knowledge of 'what is truly in itself' (WL 5:130/121)" (*ibid.*, 469).

9. This limitation to analytic philosophy is necessary, for there is a large body of interpretation of, and response to, Hegel among 'continental' thinkers that would not so readily accept the description of these approaches as 'fruitful.' It is not an aim of this dissertation to be able to engage directly with this group of readers. This is not because I think that such interpretations can be dismissed out of hand. Rather, I think that engaging them would require a very different kind of project. For an example of just such an engagement cf. Ken Kierans, "On the Limits of Contemporary Reflection on Freedom: An Analysis of Marxist and Existentialist Responses to Hegel," *Dionysius* 10 (1986): 85-128.

subsuming all earlier philosophies - that it (and it alone) was capable of understanding what was true in them and capable of raising them to a 'scientific' level. This is strikingly similar to the claims of analytic philosophy today: it is a general assumption that whatever philosophical content is present in Hegel, or some other philosopher, must be expressible in the categories of analytic philosophy (understood as just philosophy itself) and, further, that it needs to be expressed in these categories for there to be a proper assessment of it. (It is important to note that the expression of that earlier content into the categories of analytic philosophy is already an important first step in determining what is and is not properly philosophical in it, and so already a significant assessment.)¹⁰

Among philosophers, Hegel is not alone in leading us to consider what the nature of philosophy is, but he is perhaps alone in that we cannot avoid this question if we are to interpret his work at all. (To set aside Hegel's view of the nature of philosophy is to make, at a minimum, and even if only provisionally, an implicit assumption about the proper form of philosophy.) It is an assumption of this dissertation that we do not yet have an adequate answer to whether Hegel is right or not about the nature, and so proper form and content, of philosophy.

I think that we can understand an important part of what motivates Hegel's conception of

10. This is equally true for Hegel as well. It is the reason that many commentators find Hegel's history of philosophy to be an imposition of Hegelianism on past positions rather than the articulation of what was in fact philosophical or philosophically relevant in them.

philosophy by attending to a project in Plato's middle dialogues which demands that philosophy be what I will call a 'science of the Good' (where the 'Good' is understood as the principle of all things).¹¹ Hegel scholars have tended to pay closer attention to the relation between Aristotle and Hegel than to the relation between Plato and Hegel.¹² This is reasonable if one's focus is on the elaboration of particular doctrines. So, for instance, Alfredo Ferrarin has argued that understanding Aristotle's category of actuality and Hegel's interpretation of this is helpful in understanding Hegel's concept of the subject, and particularly of Hegel's concept of spirit as both substance and subject.¹³ Where I think looking to Plato is more helpful is in understanding Hegel's approach at a more programmatic level, which is to say, to understand the context of such doctrines. In my first chapter I consider Plato's dialogues *Meno*, *Phaedo*, *Republic*, and *Parmenides*. I argue that a conception of philosophy is developed in which what is sought is a knowledge that is absolute in the sense of final (absolutely stable) and comprehensive, and that is rational and teleological. In the *Phaedo* we are introduced to a 'second-best method' as a way of knowing Anaxagoras' one principle of all things (*Nous*) indirectly.¹⁴ The content of this

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11. In so far as this amounts to a conception of philosophy, it could be called 'the' project in these dialogues. My interpretation here stresses what could be called the theological side of Plato, which has received little attention in recent scholarship.
 12. An exception is M. B. Foster in *The Political Philosophies of Plato and Hegel* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1935). Foster represents Hegel as a kind of modern Platonist and hence as anti-liberal. While I think there is much that is enlightening in Foster's analysis, I differ on the question of Hegel's relation to Plato. If I am correct, then Hegel 'sublates' Plato's thought more than Foster appreciates (in large part because Foster does not attend to the dialectical form of Hegel's argument).
 13. Alfredo Ferrarin, *Hegel and Aristotle* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).
 14. Socrates (the character in the dialogue) calls this, literally, a 'second sailing.' I argue that it is correct to think of this as a 'second-best method' (as it is most often translated).

knowledge would be what is called 'the Good' in the *Republic*, understood as the rational teleological principle of all. I argue that in the *Parmenides* Plato steps back from the development of this second-best method and questions its efficacy, which more generally is to question how philosophy is possible. The result of Plato's self-criticism is the judgement that the second-best method has only enabled what Hegel will later call an 'external reflection' - a way of thinking about the Good given certain assumptions, but not a thinking of the Good from the inside out - that is, a thinking of it which would know it as, out of itself, being productive of all that is other than it. In the dialogue, such a 'divine knowledge' appears to be too high for us, yet it is also asserted that without it, discourse (and with it philosophy) would fail.

My second chapter considers what I take to be Hegel's transformation of this Platonic project. This draws particularly on the material in Hegel's introductory sections of the *Encyclopedia Logic* (which I interpret as an introduction to Hegel's system as a whole, not specifically to logic alone), but I gather together ideas which Hegel expresses in many different works: the *Science of Logic*, the *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, the *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, the *Elements of the Philosophy of Right* and the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. In the introductory sections of the *Encyclopedia Logic* (that is, the Prefaces through §83), as in the Preface and Introduction to the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Hegel allows himself to speak of his system in a way in which in the system proper he does not (because the system proper is to be, in some sense, a self-revelation - it is to be spirit's recollection of its own self-positing). My main concern is to show how Plato's project becomes what for Hegel is a demand for what he

calls a fully 'concrete' thinking. I argue that Hegel himself claims that outside of this fully concrete thinking itself, the most adequate expression of what it is demands the categories of religious representation (though these are still not fully adequate). These categories of religious representation refer to a content which, in part, must remain a mystery to the 'understanding' (at this point it is sufficient to gloss the 'understanding' as the perspective which assumes that when thought grasps the truth, the content of thought can be understood to be a set of propositions connected in an inferential scheme).¹⁵ If we do not take this claim of Hegel's seriously then we have already dismissed his claim to be articulating the truth in the only form adequate to it, a form which Hegel contends cannot be separated from content.¹⁶ I argue that in this religious representation the truth is best thought of as a divine going forth and return to self, and that this movement just *is* the divine activity. Because of this, for Hegel, truth is both an epistemological category and an ontological category (and, more importantly, these are not simply two related categories, but are united, if we understand the complete free divine activity as a divine knowing of self).¹⁷ The unity of God and creation in this view of truth would appear to be a form of

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15. Cf. EL, §20 R: "*the understanding* ... is only distinct from [representational thought] because it posits relationships of universal and particular, or of cause and effect, etc., and therefore necessary relations between the isolated determinations of representation - whereas representation leaves them *side by side*, in its undetermined space, linked only by the simple 'and' ... "
 16. One way to misunderstand Hegel is to think he is claiming that religion attempts to comprehend what a 'philosophy' limited to the products of the 'understanding' grasps ('philosophy' in quotation-marks, since for Hegel there is only one philosophy, and this requires, but is not limited to, the products of the understanding).
 17. A consequence of this view is that it would be a mistake to think that there is an actuality which is independent of knowing, and that some knowing other than this actuality grasp's it. If we set aside Hegel's claim that thought is divine/infinite, this view will begin to look

pantheism, but I argue that Hegel's view is subtly different, that it is best understood as a view of God, not as immanent, but as incarnate. This distinction becomes necessary because of Hegel's insistence on the priority of the infinite over the finite (as I interpret him). To think in terms of God incarnate is to affirm a unity of the infinite and the finite. I interpret Hegel as presenting us with the view that our thinking is, indeed, never merely finite: in art, religion, and philosophy our thinking is the divine return to self. I say Hegel 'presents' this view to us because his claim is that the justification (and even full understanding) of the view requires (or just *is*) no less than the entire movement of the *Phenomenology* (which ends in the certainty that this is true) and the *Encyclopedia*, which Hegel intends to be what can only be described as the self-expression of this truth, i.e. it is not a proof that stands independent of what it is proving, so it is more like the Cartesian self-certainty of thinking (except not limited to certainty) than a more ordinary justification of an opinion or theory. As such, the system (the form of the truth which is adequate to its content) will be circular - not turning to anything beyond itself for justification: it will have the structure of self-consciousness and it will be free. If Hegel is right about the nature of the truth, then our coming to know it will best be thought of as a journey that ends in a discovery, and further, this will be a self-discovery. As such it can be thought of as a kind of recollection which will complete Plato's project of a divine science. If the system lives up to Hegel's expectation of it, then the system will just *be* our thinking in which we are no longer only

like a form of subjective idealism. I will articulate Hegel's view as one in which there is a unity of the practical and the theoretical in the one divine activity, as there is in the freedom of an individual understood as a free subject, that is, a self-determining subject who knows her self, her freedom, in this determination (such that the doing and the knowing are two necessary moments of freedom).

referring to the content which is the truth, but are simply the thinking of that content - and so we would be that content thinking itself (so the system will not be a theory, it will be this activity of the content thinking itself).¹⁸ This is what 'concrete' thinking is (if my interpretation is correct). It might seem too much to ask us to give ourselves over to the form and content of the *Encyclopedia* in order to find out what we *do* discover. In response to this, Hegel offers us an interesting suggestion, which is that our thinking is always already rising to the perspective of the unity of the infinite and finite which he has presented us with.

My third chapter discusses the Preface to the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, where I interpret Hegel as inviting us to enter into a process which will reveal itself to be this 'concrete' thinking that the Platonic project (as transformed by Hegel) has demanded. The obvious obstacle to this is Hegel's notorious obscurity. Why would we accept the invitation? Would it mean naively giving ourselves over to a jargon (and on a larger scale an entire discourse) that is not really intelligible? I argue that Hegel attempts to create enough skepticism in us about ordinary forms of argument that it makes sense to be open to other possibilities. In this way Hegel's argument is similar to Descartes' approach of producing enough skepticism in us that we have no option but

18. This form of expression can seem to be evidence of a confusion along the lines of a category mistake (not an uncommon feeling when reading Hegel), but I mean precisely what I say (because I think Hegel means it): our thinking is abstract as long as it only refers to the content which is the truth, the objective thinking that Hegel will sometimes speak of as the *nous* that is the soul of the world (cf. EL, §24 A1). When, or if, successful, any sense of reference will drop out, except as the self-reference of self-consciousness. Hegel's truth, when adequately grasped (notwithstanding the ontological sense of truth) is not something referred to, but a content known.

to start where Descartes thinks we must, with the 'I think, I am.' Specifically, Hegel draws attention to the fact that our usual use of language, and the form of the proposition (as it was understood in his time) is wedded to the subject-predicate form, and he argues that we can understand how this form would be inadequate to a full knowing of what is actual (one way to re-state this would be to say that as long as we have need of the subject-predicate form we are still in the realm of opinion, even if well-justified opinion, not of knowledge). Further, Hegel argues that syllogistic reasoning inevitably leads to a reliance on the pre-philosophical, and so cannot avoid being dogmatic.¹⁹ I then give a (necessarily provisional and abstract) characterization of speculative thinking in Hegel's work, as his response to this skeptical predicament. I focus on Hegel's central idea that the form and content of philosophy are inseparable (with the consequence that philosophy be non-syllogistic in its over-arching form) and on the aims of speculative thinking to be both free of the pre-philosophical and complete by being self-justifying.

My fourth chapter considers one very circumscribed text in Hegel's *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, his account of the family as an ethical institution, as an example of his speculative form of argument.²⁰ My contention is that if we wish to move beyond the schematic

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19. Here I argue that Hegel's position does not rely specifically on any assumption about the proposition having the subject-predicate form and so is relevant to syllogisms generally.
 20. The entire *Elements of the Philosophy of Right* is, itself, an expansion of ideas presented in the *Encyclopedia* part III (the philosophy of Spirit). This, in itself, tells us something about Hegel's idea of the 'system,' which is free and concrete thinking, and the *Encyclopedia*: the 'system' is not simply the text of the *Encyclopedia*, it is the content which that three-part

grasp of Hegel's project we have no choice but to enter into the dialect (or a moment of it) to see what happens. If this is correct, then we are left approaching Hegel's conception of philosophy either at the macro-level or the micro-level. If we attempt to describe the dialectic at mid-level, in (necessarily) abstract terms, these will easily mislead us into thinking they might count as a formalization of it. In the course of my argument, I do not refrain at times from giving such a mid-level description (speaking of determinate negation in chapter three, for instance, though this mid-level description is never the focus of my argument), but my claim is that it would only be in retrospect, from the vantage point of having thought through the system, that we could know this description to be a fair description - and it would *only* be a description (a description of a movement of thought which leaves out the logical in that movement, since to grasp the logical in it one needs to grasp the content at each stage of the movement).²¹ If we read the section of text on the family in the *Philosophy of Right* in isolation without jettisoning the speculative form of the argument we must accept less than full understanding and justification (if

work is attempting to articulate, and so it makes sense for Hegel to expand on the *Encyclopedia* in his various lecture series (to expand on the philosophy of right, of art, of religion, and of history, and on the history of philosophy). This is not a task that Hegel ever saw as finished (cf. WL 31 and 41, for examples of comments to this effect). To repeat for clarity: *the* system is no less than the self-expression of God as truth and this must be distinguished from Hegel's attempt to articulate it in *his* system, the *Encyclopedia of Philosophical Sciences*.

21. An abstract description of Hegel's dialectic must remain external and inadequate to it. Such a description of it will not be like articulating the formal rules of inference in ordinary logic (when we do that we *do* see the logical connection: the formality of the rules does not prevent this seeing of the logical, but is, rather, at its heart). An abstract description of Hegel's dialectic is more like the description of a logician's thinking (and equally as uninformative): 'he thought through the premises and decided the conclusion followed.'

Hegel is right, that would require the argument to be understood in the context of the entire system, which is sketched in his *Encyclopaedia*). However, my contention is that we can still understand Hegel's speculative argument enough to see in it an interesting and provocative view of the family, and one which is not, as might appear on the surface, a merely superficial rationalization of the bourgeois family of Hegel's day. If that is the case, then it makes sense for us to consider whether Hegel could say what he does say in a manner less obscure, less 'speculative' (if we think what he has to say is simply wrong or uninteresting or even dangerous, then we are not going to be lead to ask this further question about method). My contention in this regard is that we cannot properly express Hegel's understanding of love if we jettison his dialectical method.

Chapter One

Hegel and Plato: Philosophy as *Theoria*, the Science of the Absolute

Part I

I. The Platonic Project

I.1. Introduction

I am going to consider two Platonic dialogues, the *Meno* and the *Parmenides*, as well as the *Phaedo* and the *Republic* in so far as they relate directly to these, in order to elucidate what I think is a central Platonic project - the attempt to work out the nature or end of philosophy and the ground of its possibility. If I am correct about Plato's conception of philosophy then there are grounds for calling this 'the' Platonic project, not with the sense of denying that Plato's interests are wide ranging and various, but with the sense that these interests are pursued within this conception of philosophy. The *Meno* is particularly helpful for considering Plato's conception of philosophy because, I will argue, it steps back from the process of philosophizing (in the form of Socratic questioning) to ask how it is possible. Less explicitly, but nonetheless required for answering the question about its possibility, the *Meno* addresses the question of the nature or end

of philosophizing.²² I will argue that there is an implicit view of knowledge (that is, knowledge

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22. I assume that the standard placement of the *Meno* as transitional between Plato's earliest 'Socratic' dialogues and the 'middle' or 'ideological' dialogues is correct on philosophical grounds, but a defense of this is beyond the scope of this chapter. I am generally following J.N. Findlay's terms and his ordering and characterization of the dialogues. Cf. *Plato and Platonism* (New York: Times Books, 1978) and *Plato: The Written and Unwritten Doctrines* (New York: Humanities Press, 1974). It should be noted that the claim that we can determine (at least in rough measure) a chronological ordering of Plato's dialogues (as also the stronger claim that we can determine a systematic ordering of them according to philosophical content, as Findlay argues) may be consistent with certain developmental theories about Plato's thought, but it does not *necessitate* a developmental view. Various developmental theses with respect to the Platonic corpus have played an important methodological role in Plato scholarship since the nineteenth century (and continue to be dominant), but were unknown before then. (The theses have varied according to their focus on philosophical content, or stylistic data in and literary character of the dialogues, or theories about Plato's frame of mind.) This methodological approach has been challenged by some - early on by Paul Shorey in *The Unity of Plato's Thought* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1903, reprint, 1960), more recently, for example, by John M. Cooper. Cf. his discussion in the introduction to *Plato: Complete Works*, ed. John M. Cooper with D.S. Hutchinson (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co., 1997). For a brief survey of the debate see William Prior, *Unity and Development in Plato's Metaphysics* (London: Croom Helm, 1985), 1-5. Shorey is responding in part to the extreme position which claims that we cannot begin to interpret Plato's thought until we have determined the historical ordering of the dialogues (and that this ordering can be achieved using '*Sprachstatistik*' - the statistical study of vocabulary and idiom). He justifiably takes this to be motivated by a desire to interpret the dialogues in a certain way, rather than being, as it professes, a merely disinterested technique of ordering, (cf. *ibid.*, 3-9). In *Platonic Ethics, Old and New* Julia Annas does not challenge the developmental approach outright, but wishes to highlight it as an (often uncritical) assumption of contemporary Platonic scholarship. See Julia Annas, *Platonic Ethics, Old and New* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999), 1-7. In "What Are Plato's 'Middle' Dialogues in the Middle of?" Annas argues directly against developmental views. See *New Perspectives on Plato, Modern and Ancient* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002), 1-21, with a counter-argument by Dorothea Frede, 25-36. The targets of Annas' argument are quite different from interpretations like that of J.N. Findlay. She argues against views which take Plato to be a partisan philosopher who changes his mind or changes his psychological state (moving from having less to more confidence, for example) as well as against views which assume changes of style must obviously track different periods of composition. Standard to many of these views, she argues, is the overly simplistic dividing of the Platonic corpus into early, merely negative dialogues, middle, naively optimistic metaphysical dialogues and late skeptical dialogues (*Parmenides* most

proper or philosophical comprehension) which takes it to be final and capable of being comprehensive. The view of the soul which compliments this is that it is the activity of recollecting the content of that knowledge, an activity which is rational and free.²³ One might reasonably extrapolate beyond the *Meno* to the idea that for knowledge to be final it would have

prominently) followed by even later more 'sober' (i.e. not so metaphysically naive and optimistic) dialogues. In taking stock of where her arguments leave us Annas in fact calls for a more thoughtful kind of questioning about development based on the content of the dialogues (rather than a complete dismissal of the idea of development). This is exactly what interpreters like J.N. Findlay and James Doull have done, so their absence in Annas' survey is puzzling (also puzzling is Annas' admonition that we take stock of ancient readings yet her sole focus is on middle Platonist readings without mention of Neoplatonist readings). In the interpretations of Findlay and Doull there is not to be found two oppositions which pervade the contemporary literature which Annas does canvass: 1. the assumed straightforward opposition between any developmental view with any unitarian view of Plato's work, and 2. the opposition of "*ad hominem*" argument in some dialogues (this is Annas' term for characterizing Socratic *elenchus* - I would say 'immanent critique') and positive exposition of doctrine in other dialogues. In particular, in Doull's interpretation of Plato's dialogues as dialectical (in a positive, not merely negative, sense) these two strands are united. For Doull's interpretation see "A Commentary on Plato's *Theatetus*," *Dionysius* I (1977): 5-47; "Findlay and Plato" in *Studies in the Philosophy of J.N. Findlay*, eds. R.S. Cohen, R.M. Martin, and M. Westphal (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1985), 250-262; "The argument to the Hypotheses in Plato's *Parmenides*," *Animus: the Canadian Journal of Philosophy and the Humanities* 4 (1999); "The Problem of Participation in Plato's *Parmenides*," *Dionysius* XIX (2001): 11-25; and "Plato's *Parmenides*," in *Philosophy and Freedom: The Legacy of James Doull*, eds., D. Peddle and N. Robertson (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003), 83-139. For a defense of assuming the standard view of the chronology of the dialogues as the best beginning point for interpretation, but without drawing any *immediate* conclusions about development in Plato's thought on that basis, see T. Irwin, "The Platonic Corpus," in *The Oxford Handbook of Plato* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 63-87.

23. I will concentrate on the section of the dialogue which deals directly with the acquisition of knowledge and theoretical activity. How practical activity relates to theoretical activity is a question which naturally arises when reading the *Meno* but no answer is developed in the dialogue. There is a suggestion, however, of a unity of the practical and theoretical in Socrates' attitude that it is not sufficient to act virtuously, one is called to know virtue, and in the celebrated Socratic paradox that virtue is knowledge.

to be actually (not just potentially) comprehensive. This would be consistent with the *Republic*. However, I am going to present what I think is demanded by the dialogue's argument without attempting to extrapolate too far from it. The reason for this is that my primary concern is to argue that there is indeed something which we can discern as a Platonic project and to articulate what it is. If there is any incompleteness in the working out of that project in Plato's dialogues I think it is important that we leave this as it is. There are two reasons for this. The first is my basic intuition that it will be more informative to look to the history of philosophy to work out any incompleteness (in this I am sympathetic to Hegel's view of that history). The second is that, whether or not my intuition above is right, for the purpose of discerning what Hegel is trying to accomplish and why he thinks it must be accomplished in the way in which he attempts to accomplish it, we will be better served if we do not tidy up loose ends in the interest of defending Plato or making his position appear immediately more plausible to us. The *Parmenides* is an especially promising dialogue with respect to coming to any judgement about a Platonic project because it gives the most explicit account of a theory of Forms in the Platonic corpus and proceeds to criticize this theory and then respond, or begin to respond, to the criticism.²⁴ My

24. It is also the only dialogue in the Platonic corpus in which the (or 'a' - if one is skeptical about characterizing it as Plato's) theory of Forms is the singular focus. Note: I capitalize 'Form' (despite no distinction between capital and small lettering being present in the Greek '*eidos*') because I accept the widespread view that '*eidos*' is a word which in Plato takes on a technical meaning. That technical meaning is far removed from - though related to - the ordinary usage of the word (the ordinary usage meaning an external, sensible shape). Like so much in Plato scholarship the idea of '*eidos*' as having a special meaning in Plato has been challenged. Cf. for example, Sandra Peterson, "*The Parmenides*," in *The Oxford Handbook of Plato* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), especially 384-388. Peterson wrongly claims that the original Greek was not capitalized (the original was *all* capitals, as well as without punctuation and spacing, later editions introduced small lettering and

idea is that the *Meno* and the *Parmenides* are like bookends to Plato's middle dialogues: the *Meno* introduces the need for them, the *Parmenides* takes critical stock of their achievement. I will examine the first section of the *Parmenides* in which the theory is expounded and criticized. I will argue that the theory it articulates is intended by Plato to be the same theory that he has been gradually developing in the middle dialogues (and so a mature statement of it), and that it clarifies for us, if we were not already convinced by those middle dialogues, that Plato's intent is to come to a final and comprehensive knowledge of all things through a knowledge of the Good, understood as the first principle, and that this is not an idiosyncratic goal of Plato's but rather his judgement that such a knowledge is necessary to philosophy. Such a knowledge is what, in Aristotle, becomes referred to as the activity of *theoria*.²⁵ I argue that the *Parmenides* directs us to the *Phaedo* in order to understand the context of the problems it presents, and that in the *Phaedo* the hypotheses of Forms, participants and participation are properly understood as a

punctuation with spacing) but she is correct in that there is no special capitalization that would mark the word out from ordinary usage (*ibid.*, 388). That, however, tells us nothing about whether in Plato's hands the word has a special meaning or not. (For a brief introduction to the manuscript and editorial history of Plato's texts see T. Irwin, "The Platonic Corpus," in *The Oxford Handbook of Plato* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 63-87.)

25. Cf. in particular *Metaphysica*, Book Alpha, chs. i-ii and Book Lambda, chs. vii and ix. Also relevant are *De Anima* III.4-5 which is (arguably) on the distinction and relation (even unity) of human and divine thinking, and *Nicomachean Ethics* X.7 on the contemplative life. Aristotle, *Metaphysica*, trans. W.D. Ross, *De Anima*, trans. J. A. Smith, and *Ethica Nicomachea*, trans. W.D. Ross in *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, ed. R. McKeon (New York: Random House, 1941). For a discussion of *dianoia* versus *nous* in Aristotle, and a textual (as distinct from a philosophical) defense of *nous* as divine, akin to Averroes' interpretation of agent intellect as divine and one in Aristotle, see Myles Burnyeat's short monograph, *Aristotle's Divine Intellect* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2008).

'second-best method' of knowing the Good as productive of all that is other than it (second-best to a direct knowledge of it). The focus of the *Parmenides* is to ask whether this second-best method has been successful. The criticisms of it, particularly the first criticism, can seem misplaced at best and facile at worst. But I think they become both intelligible and engaging when understood as a specifically Platonic criticism of a specifically Platonic logic.²⁶ I think that the interpretation of James Doull is correct in understanding the criticisms to be a unified self-critique of the second-best method, resulting, not in a morass of various difficulties, but in a particular *aporia*.²⁷ I use '*aporia*' in what I take to be Aristotle's technical sense of the term: my argument is that it is not just any problem, nor a problem which results from a criticism based on an external or hostile viewpoint, but rather it is the precise problem, generated by the project itself, which needs to be worked through for the project to continue. (This Aristotelian sense of *aporia* is closely related to what in Hegel will become the idea of immanent critique.)²⁸ I analyze the first criticism as bringing out this *aporia* and note briefly, and in a general and provisional manner, Doull's interpretation of the remaining criticisms. Over the course of the criticisms it becomes apparent that a properly scientific articulation of the logic of participation (and hence of the whole second-best method) has not been achieved. No explicit diagnosis of

26. This point was first impressed upon me by James Doull's paper, "Plato's *Parmenides*," in *Philosophy and Freedom, The Legacy of James Doull* (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 2003), 83-139.

27. See J. Doull, "The Problem of Participation in Plato's *Parmenides*," *Dionysius* XIX (2001): 11-25 and "Plato's *Parmenides*," in conjunction with J. Doull, "A Commentary on Plato's *Theaetetus*," *Dionysius* I (1977): 5-47.

28. On '*aporia*' in Aristotle, cf. Joseph Owens, "The Present Status of Alpha Elatton in the Aristotelian *Metaphysics*," *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie* 66 (1984): 148-169.

the cause of the impasse is given but, to use terms which will only become meaningful through the course of the argument, the first criticism (and, if Doull's interpretation is correct, the subsequent criticisms also) is best read as leading us to the conclusion that it has been the assumption of the separation of unity and difference in the method which lies at the heart of the problem. This is not an obvious problem (or a problem at all) if one gives up a central feature of the Forms, their intended causality, or if one assumes what the Forms are meant to demonstrate, that the sensible is not merely insubstantial.²⁹ However, if these are kept in mind, it becomes apparent that what is called for is what I will call a 'divine logic' as what would be adequate to a proper knowledge (or 'science') of the Good. This would be a logic which is the life of the first principle, knowing it would be knowing the Good as, out of itself, productive of what is other than it. What is suggested by the deficiency of the second-best method is that in this divine logic there would be the concrete unity of unity and difference. The need for this is what guides the discussion of the second part of the *Parmenides* where an attempt is made to respond to the impasse arrived at in the first part. I do not think that Plato has worked out what would be involved in such a logic satisfactorily in the latter part of the *Parmenides*, but he applies himself with all seriousness to it. Hegel likewise takes on this challenge (and more explicitly), as I will argue, and it leads to a demand for systematicity that is central to his conception of philosophy. Living up to the challenge will require, for Hegel, an overcoming of the separation of the ideal (the rational and universal) and the sensible (the empirical and particular).

29. For an interpreter who takes this approach, cf. Sandra Peterson, "The *Parmenides*," in *The Oxford Handbook of Plato* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 383-410.

I should here clarify what I intend to accomplish in this reading of Plato. My proximate goal is to establish that the interpretation I give is supported by the specific texts I discuss. At points I will contrast my interpretation with other interpretations in order to explicate my own, but I will not defend my interpretation thoroughly against the vast array of alternative interpretations in order to establish it as the most charitable or the most philosophically salient interpretation. I will also not consider what becomes of what I call 'the Platonic project' in the dialogues following the *Parmenides*.³⁰ Addressing these issues would be appropriate tasks for a complete understanding and assessment of Plato. However, my ultimate goal is to understand Hegel (or more precisely, certain aspects of Hegel's thought) on the basis of this reading of Plato. To that end, my reading of Plato needs to be reasonable in light of the texts I discuss, but need not be accepted as the best interpretation, all things considered. Further, it will eventually need to be seen as consistent with (or at a minimum relevant to) Hegel's own interpretation of Plato.

The rationale for my focus on the *Meno* and the *Parmenides* is as follows. My goal is to give a close reading of select Platonic texts. Which then to choose as most relevant to understanding Hegel, and specifically Hegel's conception of philosophy, both in method and content? I assume that the following trajectory of Plato's dialogues is generally accurate (though

30. I do in fact think that the later dialogues are best understood in the light of what I argue is Plato's conception of philosophy by the time of the *Parmenides*, but this is a strong claim of wide scope which cannot (and need not) be justified for my purposes here.

its accuracy is not crucial to my argument here).³¹ In the middle dialogues a conception of philosophy emerges in which extremely high demands are placed on what counts as knowledge (or true philosophical knowledge). This conception is developed by means of a theory - the 'second-best-method' - which presumes the existence of Forms, sensibles, and the relation of participation. The *Parmenides* summarizes that theory and criticizes it. In the light of this criticism the later dialogues attempt to work out various aspects of what could be termed a 'science of the Good.' I will not be arguing that Hegel is a Platonist in the sense of returning to or defending specific Platonic doctrines. If I were, then a focus on the later dialogues as Plato's most mature statement of such doctrines might be appropriate.³² What I think is most relevant to understanding Hegel is the initial development of Plato's project and the demands it places on philosophical knowing. It is these demands which I will argue Hegel thinks he (or as Hegel would prefer to say, philosophy in his time) can live up to, hence my focus on the middle dialogues. Of these, as noted earlier, I take the *Meno* to present Plato's project in embryonic

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31. For a more developed description of this trajectory cf. my discussion of the Platonic background to Aristotle in "An Introduction to James Doull's Interpretation of Aristotle," *Animus: the Canadian Journal of Philosophy and the Humanities* 10 (2005). What is important is my claim that *Hegel* takes the project I argue we find in the *Meno* and the *Parmenides* to be central to Plato (and philosophy more generally). If that is correct regarding Hegel but turns out not to be the best reading of Plato, then the result is that we must view Hegel's reading of Plato either as misguided (if the theme is not really present at all in Plato) or one-sided (if it wrongly imposes one theme among many on Plato's work) or as limited (if the focus on this theme leaves out too much else that is important in Plato). Of course, if Hegel has indeed misread Plato the question remains open whether that misreading has been philosophically productive.
 32. For an interpretation of Hegel, at least in his political philosophy, as a Platonist in this sense cf. M. B. Foster, *The Political Philosophies of Plato and Hegel* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1935).

form and the *Parmenides* to be a mature statement and assessment of it.

Contrary to much recent scholarship, in his lectures on the history of philosophy, Hegel treats Plato as implicitly a systematic philosopher and, on the basis of this, presents a dense, highly selective and synoptic view of Plato's work, with the design of bringing out its enduring significance.³³ This is typical of Hegel's approach in his lectures on the history of philosophy more generally. He articulates what he understands to be the significant principle at work in a philosopher or school. He does not give detailed commentaries on texts. Hence much work needs to be done in order to determine both what Hegel means and what we should make of it. At one extreme Hegel's claims might be thought to consist of casual or at least not sufficiently justified generalizations, at the other extreme they might be judged to be the result of a detailed and profound reflection on the texts available to him. My contention is that we can understand why Hegel reads Plato as he does on the basis of Plato's texts alone, without the need to begin with assumptions drawn from Hegel. This is of course to claim that Hegel himself is not grossly imposing an alien view on those texts. This is why in this first chapter I focus on Plato directly and not on Hegel's interpretation of Plato. I intend my interpretation (as a close reading of limited texts) to be complimentary to Hegel's grand overview. If I am successful this will be a partial and limited defense of Hegel's reading (partial in that I only treat the *Meno* and the *Parmenides* at length, limited in that I claim only that it reveals Hegel's interpretation not to be

33. G. W. F., Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, vol. II., trans. E.S. Haldane and F.H. Simpson (New York: The Humanities Press, 1974), 1-117.

radically anachronistic). However, my primary purpose is not to defend Hegel's reading of Plato but to understand what he sees in Plato and how he takes this up and transforms it, so that we might better understand his own conception of philosophy.

Where my claim to be treating Plato's texts directly (as opposed to through Hegel's interpretation) will be most contentious is in my articulation of the nature of the first criticism of the theory of Forms in the *Parmenides*. There I will have recourse to the language of unity and difference, and the question will arise whether this is an anachronistic reading. I do not think it is controversial to claim that these categories are important for the historical Parmenides or for Plato, and the dialogue *Parmenides* centers around the question of 'the one' and 'the many,' but should the Platonic 'one' and 'many' be understood through the categories of unity and difference, and even if so, should these categories be understood to have the kind of centrality that they have in Hegel's own thought more generally? A different way to pose these questions would be to ask whether Hegel is led to his own emphasis on these categories from his reading of Parmenides (the philosopher) and Plato (among others) or whether they arise from later concerns which he mistakenly imposes on ancient philosophy. These are difficult questions to come to a final judgment on, especially since the criticisms of the Forms in the *Parmenides* are so terse. Making sense of those criticisms will demand the use of some categories not explicitly present (if we are attempting an understanding, not simply a paraphrasing, of the criticisms). I can only say here that I believe these or any other categories are used reasonably if through them we can discern a logic in the structure of the text. I think this approach is especially defensible in the case of the

works of Plato which, as dialogues, necessarily present their philosophical content in an indirect form. This demands of the reader a certain kind of second-order interpretative task - we must ask not only what is said (and whether it is justified) but why it is said.

I.2. The Beginning of a Platonic Project in the *Meno*

Plato's dialogue, the *Meno*, divides itself into three sections.³⁴ The first of these (70a-79e) reads like a typical early Socratic dialogue: a question about virtue is raised and Meno's initial confidence in having a sure knowledge of virtue is found to be without a rational foundation. He has given many fine and presumably well-received speeches about virtue in the past but now is at a complete loss to say what virtue is (80a-b). The second section of the dialogue begins with Meno's response to this *aporetic* state. He accuses Socrates of practicing sorcery, numbing his interlocutors as a torpedo fish numbs those who come too close (80a-b). That is, he blames Socrates for unnaturally creating the *aporia*. This suggests that there is a fault in the question asked or demand made by Socrates. Following this objection Meno gives an argument ("Meno's paradox," 80d) which, if sound, would reveal the search for knowledge to be impossible. In Meno's objection we have a practical argument, in his paradox a theoretical argument, that

34. Plato, *Meno*, trans. G.M.A. Grube (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co., 1981). References to the Greek text are from Plato, *Meno*, with a translation by W.R.M. Lamb (London: William Heinemann, 1914). I will refer to the characters in this and other dialogues by their name alone. Where I intend a reference to the historical person I will indicate this unless it is obvious.

Socrates' life - and philosophy itself - is at best futile, and at worst perverse and perverting. Socrates re-formulates Meno's paradox and then presents the myth or doctrine of learning as recollection as a response to the paradox (and also, less directly, as a response to Meno's objection) (81-86c). Meno asks Socrates to show him that learning is recollection and Socrates agrees to do his best by questioning one of Meno's attendants in a manner not unlike familiar Socratic *elenchi*. In the final section of the dialogue (86c ff.) we return to the question of the nature of virtue and its acquisition.

I will be concentrating on the second section of the dialogue. The first and third sections of the dialogue are similar to earlier dialogues which present Socrates in a manner which, through their dramatic characterization, seem to capture the historical Socrates (though the third section begins to take on the character of later Platonic dialogues in the brevity of the answers of Socrates' interlocutors and Socrates' more explicit control of the conversation). This does not mean that their content is not Platonic, but the second section, I suggest, is more explicitly Platonic. It is an interlude in which we step back from the *elenctic* process in order to ask what its end is and what the ground of its possibility is. This is, in effect, to ask about the nature and possibility of philosophy itself.³⁵ These questions are brought to the fore by Meno's objections. Meno states his paradox in this way: "How will you look for it [virtue], Socrates, when you do not know at all what it is? How will you aim to search for something you do not know at all? If

35. If I am correct in this, then it is appropriate to speak of this central project as 'the' Platonic project in that it amounts to Plato's conception of philosophy itself, and so forms the basic context of specific problems and arguments found in Plato's work.

you should meet with it, how will you know that this is the thing that you did not know?" (80d).

Socrates re-formulates this as follows:

I know what you want to say, Meno. Do you realize what a debater's argument you are bringing up, that a man cannot search for what he knows or for what he does not know? He cannot search for what he knows - since he knows it, there is no need to search - nor for what he does not know, for he does not know what to look for (80e).

The nature of, and motivation for, Socrates' response to Meno's paradox is a matter of controversy. The structure of the dialogue suggests that the story of recollection is meant to carry the burden of response and that the *elenchus* which follows is meant to support or help us understand that story.³⁶ Meno asks Socrates: "Does [my] argument not seem sound to you, Socrates? Socrates: Not to me. Meno: Can you tell me why?" Socrates says he *can* tell Meno and immediately recounts the divinely inspired story of recollection which he calls 'true and beautiful' (81a). After this Meno asks Socrates: "If you can somehow show me that things are as you say, please do so" (82a). Socrates agrees to do so by questioning one of Meno's attendants. However, the myth of recollection has seemed an eccentric embarrassment to many commentators and so it is often passed over or an attempt is made to relegate it to playing a minor role in the dialogue. Gail Fine has argued that the recollection story is not sufficient on its own to answer the paradox, while the *elenchus*, taken independently, is. She interprets the recollection story as a secondary account whose purpose is to explain one aspect of the *elenchic*

36. I will assume here that the exchange with Meno's slave *is* a normal Socratic *elenchus*, though this has been challenged.

response.³⁷ More specifically, Fine interprets the *elenchus* as demonstrating that if, in fact, (whether we know it or not), we have one/some true belief(s) and the capacity for rational reflection and the revision of our beliefs, inquiry (the systematic search for and attainment of knowledge) will be possible because we have a natural tendency, upon reflection, to reject false beliefs in favor of true beliefs. She interprets the recollection story as an attempt at an explanation of this natural tendency towards holding true rather than false belief upon reflection.³⁸ Contrary to Fine, I will argue that the myth of recollection is indeed Plato's response to the paradox. To see why this is so will involve sorting out how Socrates understands Meno's paradox, what the story of recollection means, and what it is intended to explain.

What is striking is that Socrates takes Meno's paradox so seriously. *Prima facie* it does not seem compelling: surely we have much partial knowledge about various things or knowledge of related things and so can seek to know more. Meno's questions have the feel of an eristic device learned from Gorgias, and Socrates alludes to this (80e). Socrates also is quick to say that the argument (at least as he reformulates it) is unsound (81a). Yet he does not dismiss it as a trick nor give a quick and straightforward rebuttal of it. This suggests that Socrates acknowledges that there is some important problem which is being raised. Socrates' reformulation gives some hint of what this problem is as well as what Socrates' intuition about

37. Gail Fine, "Inquiry in the Meno," in *The Cambridge Companion to Plato*, ed. Richard Kraut (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 200-226.

38. Fine, 207-215.

the nature of knowledge must be such that there is a problem. There are significant differences between Socrates' reformulation and Meno's version. 1) Meno only considers the difficulty of inquiring when we do not know, but Socrates adds that inquiry likewise seems impossible when we know. 2) Meno's formulation has a clear reference to the specific question about virtue and is couched in terms that have a sensuous flavor to them (speaking, for example, of meeting with the thing one is searching for). Socrates generalizes the problem and couches it in non-sensuous terms. 3) Finally, Socrates' reformulation sets up a simple contrast between having knowledge and not having knowledge, with the conclusion that no transition from the latter to the former state is possible.

I will return to the second difference later and for now will concentrate on the first and last. My approach will be to consider what Socrates' intuition about the nature of knowledge must be such that there is some apparent (and significant) plausibility to these problems. They are not plausible if we take 'knowledge' in a weak sense, as when I say 'I know the new neighbor' (or, to use an example from the last section of the dialogue to which I will return, knowing the way to Larissa) nor even in the stronger sense of the well-justified body of beliefs espoused by a mature empirical science. Beliefs, even well-justified ones, are in principle provisional.³⁹ The scientist is always open to changing his beliefs based on new evidence or a

39. I will use 'belief' and 'opinion' interchangeably (Plato uses '*doxa*'). The first and third sections of the *Meno*, as also the early Platonic dialogues generally, serve to bring out the instability of opinion. Socrates' adroitness at this is what he shares in common with the sophists of his day. There is an important interpretative question whether the instability of opinion has only a subjective source or both a subjective and an objective source. That is,

better theory. If we are to ascribe knowledge to the scientist then we must accept a view of knowledge that would not render such changes of mind irrational. We must be able to make sense of claiming that the scientist knows yet nevertheless wants to know, not just other things, but the same things better (in his willingness to revise his beliefs about them). Socrates' stark contrast between either knowing or not knowing differs from this in its assumption of a finality to knowing. Here a change of mind makes no sense. Contrary to the relative stability of the scientist's view, Socrates' knower would have an absolutely stable view. This explains why Socrates accepts that a transition from ignorance to knowledge is problematic: how would we ever know that our grasp was indeed final and so be knowledge proper, not (unavoidably provisional) belief? And conversely, if we were to know this, there would be no room left for inquiry into the thing that we know.

The idea that Socrates is being moved by *some* implicit intuition about the nature of knowledge is corroborated in the first section of the dialogue. In that section Socrates has the ability to say that he does not know what virtue is at all (he refers to his “complete ignorance about virtue” 71b). He must then have some idea of what knowing would be, on which to base this judgement, though none is stated. He does not say that he might or might not know, and that the problem is that he doesn't know whether he knows or could know. His judgement is the simple one that ‘I do not know.’ And, significantly, this awareness of ignorance does not lead

is there something deficient in the objects of opinion? I will not pursue this here because the *Meno* does not address this (the *Phaedo* and *Republic* begin to and I will say something about it when I discuss the *Phaedo* and the *Parmenides*).

Socrates to give up questioning, rather, his response is to inquire.

I will use the term 'absolute knowledge' to capture the aspect of finality which I am arguing is present in the intuition about the nature of knowledge which Socrates must have for him to reformulate Meno's paradox as he does and to see it as presenting a profound difficulty. I do not, however, intend finality to be a definition of absolute knowledge, or at least as anything more than a provisional definition. At this stage, what can be said is that Socrates places a very high, perhaps even impossible, demand on what counts as knowledge, and that the one specific characteristic we can discern so far which makes the demand so high is that knowledge be final. We must be open to further characterizations of this knowledge, and I intend the term 'absolute' to be able to accommodate these (or to be dropped if any of these deem it to be inappropriate). My point is that Plato is not presenting a doctrine of knowledge so much as he is working out what that doctrine should consist in. Just as it is reasonable in the *Phaedo*, I think, to understand Plato to be arguing that what (the historical) Socrates was *really* searching for were the Forms, even if Socrates was not himself able to articulate the problem in this way and even if we (and Plato) still need much inquiry in order to know fully what the Forms are, so too my claim is that it is reasonable to understand Plato in the *Meno* to be arguing that Socrates is demanding a knowledge which we have reason to term absolute, even though we (and Plato) do not know fully what this knowledge is or would be.

To anticipate the argument of the dialogue for a moment, we find just such a further

characterization of knowledge when, in discussing the implications of the story of recollection, Socrates makes the surprisingly strong claim that if one knows one thing then one can come to know all things (81d). I will return to a fuller discussion of this but for now I want to point out that, if true, this means that knowledge is potentially comprehensive. The view of knowledge which emerges is that to know is to grasp the truth in an absolutely stable manner and to be able to come to a grasp of the whole truth. That this is the emerging view in the *Meno* has some confirmation in its consistency with the middle books of the *Republic* where something closer to a doctrine of knowledge is expressed.⁴⁰ In the image of the line Plato begins to develop a technical vocabulary in so far as he distinguishes different levels of our grasp of what is (and correspondingly different levels of what is grasped). A fully adequate knowing is only accomplished in *noesis*, which is distinguished from *dianoia*.⁴¹ In *dianoia* thought has come to its proper object, but its activity remains dependent on hypotheses. It can only arrive at conclusions based on these.⁴² It is, then, still provisional. In *noesis* we are said to begin with hypotheses but to come to an unhypothetical first principle (what is elsewhere referred to as the

40. Plato, *Republic*, trans. G.M.A. Grube, revised by C.D.C. Reeve (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co., 1992), Books V-VII. Even in the *Republic* I do not think it can be assumed that Plato is simply presenting a doctrine rather than still being on the way to it.

41. Both *noesis* and *dianoia* are spoken of as knowledge, but *noesis* is the consummate knowledge.

42. "In one subsection [of the intelligible], the soul, using as images the things that were imitated before, is forced to investigate from hypotheses, proceeding not to a first principle but to a conclusion. In the other subsection, however, it makes its way to a first principle that is *not* a hypothesis, proceeding from a hypothesis but without the images used in the previous subsection, using forms themselves and making its investigation through them" (*Republic*, VI, 510b).

Good). The unhypothetical knowing announced in the *Republic*, rather than being a particular species of belief, would be free of belief altogether. How we free ourselves from the hypotheses as given and know them, not as inevitable or merely given starting points, but properly as hypotheses is not explained. But as a general program what Plato intends is clear enough.⁴³ It is not difficult to see in this idea of what constitutes a fully adequate grasp of thought's proper object both the finality and the comprehensiveness which I have argued emerge as being assumed to be necessary to knowledge in the *Meno* and the rejection of a conception of knowledge as a species of belief.

There is one important detail in the dialogue which might be thought to call the interpretation defended above into question. Though the *Meno* says very little directly about what knowledge is, it is common to take Socrates to be giving a definition of knowledge in the concluding section (98a). Fine, for instance, interprets this (not unreasonably) as defining knowledge as justified true belief.⁴⁴ What Socrates says is:

. . . true opinions, as long as they remain, are a fine thing and all they do is good, but they are not willing to remain long, and they escape from a man's mind, so

43. "Then also understand that, by the other subsection of the intelligible [the highest, *noesis*], I mean that which reason itself grasps by the power of dialectic. It does not consider these hypotheses as first principles but truly as hypotheses - stepping stones to take off from, enabling it to reach the unhypothetical first principle of everything. Having grasped this principle, it reverses itself and, keeping hold of what follows from it, comes down to a conclusion without making use of anything visible at all, but only of forms themselves, moving on from forms to forms, and ending in forms" (*Republic*, VI, 511b).

44. Fine, "Inquiry in the *Meno*."

that they are not worth much until one ties them down by (giving) an account of the reason why [*aitias logismwi*]. And that, Meno my friend, is recollection, as we previously agreed. After they are tied down, in the first place they become knowledge [*epistemai gignontai*], and then they remain in place (98a).

Grube's translation is sensitive to an important point: "*gignontai*" could mean simply 'are' or it could mean 'become.' If we take it to be the latter, then this could be, not a definition of knowledge, but a description of the process through which we come to knowledge. The difference is crucial, for if it is the latter, then there is no commitment to the idea that the state of belief remains when we know. As a description of a process it is consistent with the idea that determining the account transforms our state of believing into a higher state of knowing.⁴⁵ Even if Socrates' statement *is* meant to be a definition then we still must decide what he means by "*aitias logismwi*." One possibility is that this amounts to the kind of justification found in mature empirical sciences. This would be consistent with defining knowledge as justified true belief. But another possibility is that the "*aitias logismwi*" would be an account whose effect would, as above, be transformative of belief.⁴⁶ Hence whether Socrates' statement at 98a is read as a definition or as the description of the process of coming to know, there is a plausible interpretation of it in which knowledge is *not* a species of belief.

45. I will later give one possible sense to what such a transformation would amount to.

46. This would be consistent with the argument of the *Republic* (in Books V through VII) that to rule well the philosopher must ascend to the knowledge of the Good (summed up in the allegory of the cave), an ascent which requires both the right disposition and years of education.

There is one less important detail which might also be thought to call into question the idea that Socrates is seeking absolute knowledge (or that Plato is discerning this in the demands of Socrates). Immediately prior to the discussion of tying down true belief with 'an account of the reason why' Socrates has introduced the distinction between true belief and knowledge, and the idea that true belief is defective because it is unstable. This distinction is occasioned by the realization that of the many famously virtuous people considered in the dialogue not one is known to have been able to teach his children to be virtuous, though it is assumed that this would have been a priority and so the attempt must have been made. Socrates had argued earlier that virtue must be knowledge. The above seems to be a counter-example to this conclusion: if virtue is knowledge it should be teachable (presumably in some non-standard sense, since Socrates has already argued that there is no learning except when understood as recollection).⁴⁷ Socrates' response is that the paragons of virtue must have had true belief, not knowledge, and that true belief, while it lasts, is as effective for virtuous action as knowledge is, but that it is not teachable. This would explain the case of virtuous fathers and non-virtuous sons. He then attempts to persuade Meno of the point that true belief and knowledge are indeed equally effective for action. The example is given of a person who happens to have a true belief about the right way to Larissa *versus* the person who has actually gone there and knows the way. Each are said to be equally good at leading others to Larissa.

47. Socrates elsewhere describes himself as a midwife, bringing to birth the thoughts of others. This would be one such non-standard (though not strange) understanding of teaching.

It might be thought that the significance of the example is that it is giving an instance of knowledge. If it is then there is reason to doubt the ascription of absoluteness to the knowledge which is at issue in the dialogue, for 'knowledge' is used in the Larissa example as we would expect it to be used in normal conversation under normal circumstances. But I think it is clear that this is a limited illustration of a specific point, namely, the equal efficacy of true belief and knowledge with respect to action. This is how it is introduced. Socrates says that the ascription of knowledge to the exemplars of virtue was a mistake ("... it is ridiculous that we failed to see that it is not only under the guidance of knowledge that men succeed in their affairs ..."). Further, it illustrates by giving an analogy of knowledge. If we press the illustration any further we come to at least two difficulties. First, the man who has true belief about the way to Larissa is said to be able to lead others there, and so presumably to be able to teach them the way. But this is precisely what those with true belief about virtue cannot do. The analogy is then not to be taken even as capturing every aspect of true belief. Second, if knowing the way to Larissa is an instance of the knowledge which Socrates seeks why would Socrates restate Meno's paradox and take it seriously? Finding out the way to Larissa does not seem to offer us any mysteries.

Understanding there to be an implicit demand for absolute knowledge in Socrates' life of inquiry, in the sense of a final grasp of what is, makes sense of the simple dichotomy of knowing or not knowing in Socrates' reformulation of Meno's paradox.⁴⁸ And it gives rise to the problem

48. One could even see the need for the comprehensiveness which is only claimed in (or after, depending on how one reads the passage) the myth of recollection: a grasp of anything less

about the possibility of a transition from a state of ignorance to that of knowing, and the needlessness of inquiry when one does know. These are the essence of Meno's theoretical objection to Socrates' questioning, at least as Socrates understands that objection. I said earlier that Meno also gives a practical objection. This is best understood in relation to the theoretical one, that is, it is best understood as asking: how could we and why would we have the desire for such a knowledge? And if we do have such a desire, is it incapacitating? A full explanation of inquiry would involve an explanation and vindication of the desire which is necessary to it. To put this in a more general form, Meno is not only asking whether philosophy is possible but whether it is proper to us. The dramatic composition of the dialogue leaves us in no doubt where Plato himself stands regarding the latter question and serves to underscore the practical urgency of it. Plato has chosen his cast carefully: we, and Plato's contemporary audience, all know that Meno never did acquire virtue. As recounted in Xenophon, Meno was infamous for his treachery in the pursuit of wealth, and for the year long torture and eventual death which he earned by it.⁴⁹ What distinguishes Meno from Socrates is that Socrates desires to know, Meno desires to win.

If my interpretation is correct, then both the desire for absolute knowledge and the possibility of attaining it need to be explained (at a minimum an attempt at an explanation is called for). These demands lead Plato to an examination of the soul. The form in which the

than the whole would seem to be necessarily provisional.

49. Xenophon, *Anabasis*, trans. C.L. Brownson, revised by J. Dilleney (Cambridge: Loeb Classical Library, Harvard University Press, 1998), II.6.

second question is presented in the dialogue is to ask how we can move from opinion to knowledge (which I have argued must be understood as absolute knowledge). On my interpretation this requires understanding, not a tendency towards true belief upon reflection, but the rise to an activity (knowing) which is free from any dependancy on belief.

Plato attempts to give an explanation of the above in the story of recollection. I suggest that Plato intends us to understand this story as myth in the positive sense of an inspired image of the truth.⁵⁰ As an image its form is inadequate to its content, but this inadequacy does not mean it is simply fanciful or false. The task of philosophy will be to transform it into a form that *is* adequate to its content. Socrates begins this process even in the re-telling of the story: there is a seamless transition from what is clearly a report of the story at 81b to what is clearly an interpretation of it at 81d where Socrates refers to the “debater’s argument” (Meno’s paradox) which elicited the re-telling of the story. It is consistent with this view that Socrates would make the qualification at 86b (after the recollection story and the *elenchus* with the slave): “I do not

50. Plato’s relation to poetry and divine inspiration are, of course, much disputed. I here only give one view. I think there is good reason not to take references to priests or priestesses and poets as pejorative or cautionary in many instances throughout Plato’s works, but I will not argue this here. For a dissenting view from much recent Plato scholarship on this cf. Robert Crouse, " 'In Aenigmate Trinitas' (Confessions, XIII, 5,6): The Conversion of Philosophy in St. Augustine's *Confessions*," *Dionysius* XI (1987): 53-62. He writes: "Platonism, from Plato, and throughout its history, is never a “natural” philosophy, as distinguished from theology. It is always inevitably and emphatically theological, as it ascends the line from belief to understanding, as it interprets allegorically the oracles and dreams and visions of divinely possessed prophets, poets and philosophers: ever seeking understanding in the light of eternal reasons, ever aspiring towards a unitive knowledge of the supreme transcendent Good; ever seeking *homoiosis theou*—divine likeness" (56).

insist that my argument is right in all other respects, but I would contend at all costs both in word and deed as far as I could that we will be better men, braver and less idle, if we believe that one must search for the things one does not know” (86b). The details of an image are not to be held onto dogmatically, but this is not to dismiss their significance.⁵¹ If we do take Socrates’ statement as a dismissal of the story then we are left with him making a bare assertion that we will be better if we inquire.⁵²

The myth of recollection which Socrates recounts is extremely brief and has a minimum of detail: the soul is said to be immortal, at times dying, at times being born, but never perishing; it has seen all things in Hades and this world; there is nothing that it has not learned; and it is able to recollect all that it knew. Socrates adds what appears to be his own interpretation that if the soul recalls one thing it can discover everything else for itself (81c-d). Socrates twice refers back to this myth. After the *elenchus* with the slave he concludes that the slave had true opinions within him when he did not know, and if these are stirred up by questioning the slave will come to know the objects of mathematics as accurately as anyone else. This is described as the slave finding knowledge within himself, and Socrates claims the slave could do the same for all other

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51. If, for instance, we come to know the Good, the image of the sun as given in the *Republic* will no longer be necessary, but this does not diminish its significance as an image as long as we are still on the way to the knowledge of the Good.
 52. Even if we accept the *elenchus* with the slave as establishing *that* inquiry is possible, it does not support Socrates’ assertion that inquiry will make us *better*. In having Socrates make these qualifying remarks Plato may also be making the point here that the account given is Plato’s - that it is an explanation of Socrates’ search, but not one that Socrates himself was able to articulate.

knowledge. Finally (as a premise in arguing that the soul is immortal) Socrates says that the truth of all things that are is always in the soul (85c-86b). Then in the concluding section of the dialogue Socrates argues that true opinions are of no great value unless tied down by an *aitias logismwi* and adds that this is what Meno and he had agreed was recollection. When true opinions are tied down they are said to become knowledge (*epistemai gignontai*) (98a).

The lack of detail in the myth is significant. As myth it should not be read literally, and Socrates indicates that it should not be so read (as noted above, 86b). I am suggesting the lack of detail is intentional because it makes it extremely difficult to read the myth literally.⁵³ This is also the case with the details of the reception of the myth. Meno wants to know the precise source but Socrates carefully avoids any mention of specific person, place or time. Socrates quotes Pindar but the story is said to be told by those inspired by the divine (men, women, priests, priestesses, poets). The source is placed beyond the natural distinctions of sex, person, time and place.⁵⁴ It is a universal myth, not a particular or idiosyncratic one. The content of the myth is essentially about the state of the soul *now*: the soul is in the state of having learned all things but forgotten them.⁵⁵ It is important to note here that there is no mention of body in the

53. If the story is taken literally the very idea of acquisition becomes incoherent. In the story the soul is immortal. If there is a time of acquisition (first acquisition, not subsequent acquisition, which is recollection) then we must say that the soul had existed forever before this time, hence had seen all things, hence had acquired a knowledge of all things. But then the supposed first acquisition would not be the first. All acquisition would be recollection.

54. This point was first suggested to me by D. K. House.

55. Here I accept Vlastos' rendering of the Greek at 86a: the slave's soul "has been for ever in the condition of *having* [once] *acquired* knowledge" (Vlastos, "Anamnesis in the *Meno*,"

account and so no suggestion of a soul/body dualism, nor of the related idea of reincarnation.⁵⁶

Further, the soul is not presented as a thing. What is presented is the idea of the soul as the activity of having learned all things, forgotten all, and recollecting all. In this, the soul is not passive in relation to a content given to it from without. It is thoroughly active, coming to a full possession of a content that is its own. Hence Socrates' insistence that there is no teaching, only learning (understood as recollection).⁵⁷ Hence also his conclusion that the truth is in the soul (86b). What is meant by this last point is open to much interpretation, partly because the *Meno* does not work out explicitly what the nature of the content of knowledge is. I am interpreting 'truth' in the above ('*e aletheia*') as being the real, not as being the correct correspondence of a belief and what it is a belief about. How such truth could be in us is not readily apparent. The expression of this idea is so condensed in the *Meno* that various interpretations are plausible. However, one way in which this could be is to be found in Plato's later theory of Forms as traditionally understood.⁵⁸ If one interprets that theory as holding that the Forms are intelligible

Dialogue 4, no. 2 (1965), n. 14, 153, on this also Fine, "Inquiry in the *Meno*," n. 40, 223, n. 42, 225), though I take the significance of this to be slightly different. Vlastos is concerned to show that Plato is not presenting a theory of latent knowledge. I am taking the state of having learned, not the process of acquiring knowledge, to be what is important about the soul's pre-human existence in the story. The *Meno* does not explicitly speak of forgetfulness but this must be intended in the account, if the soul was once in the state of having learned but is now aware of its ignorance.

- 56. Familiarity with the *Phaedo* can easily lead one to assume a soul/body dualism in the *Meno*. Graeme Nicholson brought this to my attention.
- 57. Immediately after recounting the myth Socrates needs to remind Meno of this (81e-82a). Nothing can be taught (at least in a standard sense) because knowledge is not given nor received.
- 58. I say 'traditionally' since this interpretation can be found as far back as Aristotle. I give this as an illustration, not as a claim that the theory of Forms is implicit in the *Meno*. But the

and are the cause of the sensible then the content of the thinking which knows the Forms would not be representations of things external to that thinking. Further, that content would be the ‘truth of’ the sensible (versus ‘a true belief about’ the sensible) if the sensible is understood to be the appearance of the intelligible Forms. On this traditional interpretation the truth (as the real) *would* be in the soul.⁵⁹

The account of recollection as I have interpreted it responds to the problem of desire in *Meno*’s paradox. The structure of desire is that, in some sense, we must possess what we do not possess.⁶⁰ In the imagery of the myth, we have an awareness of our forgetfulness. To express this in different terms, we have an intuition of an absolute knowing whose content is proper to and within thought. The actual possession of knowledge is possible through the recollection of

fact that Plato goes on to articulate a theory of Forms lends support to the view I am defending about Plato’s basic intuition and intention here.

59. If one were to attempt a more literal reading of the myth, one might be tempted to interpret Socrates’ comment that the truth is in us as meaning that the soul, in its pre-human existence, had true beliefs about all things. But there is a great difficulty in how it would then have the truth about future contingent things, (which it must have in a literal interpretation if it is to be an account of the acquisition of all knowledge). In my interpretation, the content of knowledge is not a set of beliefs about the contingent and sensible world. The content of knowledge is the truth of this world: in the *Republic* that content is understood as the intelligible Forms. In the lower section of the Platonic line we can speak of a correspondence between opinion and the object of sense, but as we rise up the line, there is an increasing integration of knower and known (strictly speaking we would have to say ‘opiner’ and ‘opined’ for the lower levels). In knowledge (in the *noesis* at the top of the line), the Forms, as intelligible, do not remain external to the thinking of them.
60. I am indebted to D. K. House’s discussions of the *Symposium* for this idea about the structure of desire. Aristotle works this out in terms of the categories of potentiality and actuality.

the truth that is in us. Socrates says that because the whole of nature is akin, after recalling one thing, nothing prevents us from recalling everything else (81d). The claim that the whole of nature is akin (*suggenous*) seems to enter abruptly. Why would Socrates say that all things are related (not just related to something)?⁶¹ The interpretation I have given of how it is that the truth is in us is consistent with the idea expressed in the *Timaeus* that the temporal is the moving image of eternity, if we take the eternal to be the rational.⁶² Now for it to be rational it must exhibit unity in diversity - a lack of connection would make it impervious to thought, since thinking requires a connecting and dividing. It would be true then that the truth of nature is akin (and so nature as the appearance of this would be akin in a derivative way). If one aspect of this truth be determined then in principle the rest should be recollectable.⁶³ But what is the ‘one thing’ to which Socrates refers? The Greek text could be interpreted to mean some specific thing or any one thing. If it is the latter, it could not be merely a true belief - this alone is not recollection. Recollection is or involves an *aitias logismwi*, and this necessarily entails more than some isolated proposition. ‘One thing’ must either be a specific true account or any true

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61. S. Tigner attempts to interpret Socrates’ claim as the much more limited claim that everything is related to things of the same class in “On the ‘kinship’ of ‘all nature’ in Plato’s *Meno*,” *Phronesis* 15 (1970): 1-4.
 62. Plato, *Timaeus*, trans. D. J. Zeyl, in *Plato: Complete Works*, ed. J.M. Cooper with D.S. Hutchinson (Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Co., 1997), 37d.
 63. Socrates never distinguishes different methods of inquiry consequent on different classes of objects of inquiry as Tigner suggests (“On the ‘kinship’ of ‘all nature’ in Plato’s *Meno*”). All learning is recollection. And this is the recollection of knowledge which is, in some sense, already within us. What motivates Tigner’s interpretation is that he does not take recollection seriously. He assumes that what Socrates is alluding to are the various methods which are relevant to the inquiry into objects which are external to us.

account. In the dialogue this is, in Socrates' case, the account expressed by the recollection myth (what is not clear is whether this just happens to be, or necessarily is, the one thing Socrates recalls).⁶⁴ This needs some qualification - Socrates does not claim to fully understand the account (also priests and prophets are said to be without an understanding of it, 99d). But he does believe it to be 'true and beautiful' (81a) and insists on the virtue of searching and the distinction between true belief and knowledge. The account is what justifies these two bold claims. We can say at a minimum that Socrates has an intuition of the soul's having possessed all knowledge, having forgotten this, and being capable of re-possessing it. It may be a moot point whether this is the one thing necessary or whether the recollection of any (true) account is sufficient for us to recollect all things, since, if Socrates' intuition is correct, then any true account would necessarily also have this intuition in it (it wouldn't be true if it did not take the account to have been within but forgotten by the soul).⁶⁵

I argued earlier that Socrates takes Meno's paradox seriously because his search for knowledge has the implicit demand that this knowledge be absolute. The account of learning as recollection answers this demand in terms of the autonomy of reason. The myth asserts that to know, we must turn inward to the soul to find the truth of all, which is within the soul.⁶⁶

64. It is interesting that in the *Phaedo* Cebes says that recollection is a theory which Socrates mentions frequently (Plato, *Phaedo*, trans. G.M.A. Grube (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co., 1981), 72e).

65. In the later theory of Forms (as interpreted above) this would be to say that to know any one Form involves knowing what it is to be a Form.

66. Without giving a full argument I would suggest that the idea of the necessity of an inward

Opinions about the world, when seen as deficient (as unstable) are the occasion of this inward turn. The story of recollection commands our serious attention only when, with Socrates' interlocutors, we have come to a recognition of our lack of knowledge. Without the experience of the *aporetic* state in which Socrates' discussions end, the story would appear arbitrary and fanciful. We begin then, with opinions, but the knowledge which results from the inward turn consequent on an awareness of their deficiency is not dependent upon these opinions as premises (or evidence). In finding the truth which is in it, thought is active and free of any reliance on external authority, on anything as simply given to it. This is consistent with the idea which Plato later develops that (absolute) knowledge must be unhypothetical.⁶⁷

After the account of learning as recollection, Meno asks Socrates to show him that it is true. Socrates is hesitant, but agrees to make the attempt to demonstrate it to Meno (81e-82b).

turn has been present from the very beginning of the dialogue. Meno is described as being a traditional Thessalian aristocrat with a confidence in the objectivity of virtue, yet he is also described as having been educated by the sophist Gorgias. In contrast, Socrates' Athenians divide into those on the one hand who profess skepticism (who do not, or cannot, see beyond a negative result to Socrates' questioning and the Sophists' arguments, 70c - 71a) and those on the other hand, represented by Anytus (89e ff.), who dogmatically assert what is true but refuse to enter into a thoughtful understanding of their belief. Socrates makes it clear that Meno is necessary for the inquiry into virtue to proceed. This suggests that both of the sides present in Meno are necessary to philosophical inquiry. The subjectivism of Gorgias is not to be opposed from without, but developed from within to the point of finding objectivity in it. (That there might be a philosophical relevance to the description of Meno's character was first suggested to me by D. K. House.) The need for an inward turn also makes sense of Socrates' reformulation of Meno's paradox in non-sensuous terms.

67. As noted earlier, the distinction between hypothetical and unhypothetical knowing becomes crucial to distinguishing *noesis* (i.e. *episteme* proper) from *dianoia* in *Republic*, VI.

Socrates' uneasiness is understandable and philosophically important: how can we have such a demonstration (or any demonstration) while we are in a state of unknowing? Socrates' strategy is to turn to mathematics. For the demonstration to move Meno (or us), Meno (and we) must recognize that the slave boy begins with a true belief, and through nothing but the power of his own reasoning is able to judge that other beliefs are true beliefs. How can we be certain of the truth of these beliefs? If we are not, then the demonstration would not differ from any Sophists' demonstration that he can first confuse and then change the opinion of his interlocutor. What enables Socrates' demonstration to work is that mathematics is based on axioms which we can all agree on because we have laid them down.⁶⁸ The need for axioms parallels the beginning of the *elenchus* with the slave where the boy says he knows what a square is, and he makes it clear that he has the universality of a mathematical object (not its physical image in the sand) in mind, and we too recognize this as a square.⁶⁹

68. It is tempting to think that Socrates is being disingenuous or at least taking an easy but irrelevant route in turning to math. My point is that, contrary to this, for those of us whose life is a life lived through opinion, not knowledge, the turn to mathematics is a necessary step. This is consistent with Plato's later views regarding education (and the image of the line) in the *Republic* in which a long apprenticeship in mathematics is required before an adequate knowing of the Forms is achieved (*Republic*, Book VII, especially 537c-d and 522c-531d).

69. It is important that Socrates says he will give a demonstration *to Meno*. He is not giving an absolute proof. He is giving a proof which will move Meno on the assumption of the agreement about the truth of certain beliefs. Assuming the beginning point, Meno can recognize the power of reason within himself as the basis for judgement, hence opinions judged true are *his own* opinions. This allows Meno to affirm that the slave boy has arrived at opinions which are truly his own (they are not opinions which enter him unfreely).

In the course of the *elenchus* the slave gives honest answers. He says what he thinks, what he judges to be true. He makes mistakes and corrects himself. Socrates presents him with opinions to be considered but tells him not to accept anything on his (Socrates') authority but rather to answer for himself. What we witness is an ability in the slave to distinguish between true belief and knowledge, and between true belief and false belief. Based on his initial assumption of what a square is and his own rational reflection the slave rejects some of his beliefs as false, yet despite this he denies knowledge, and when he is confronted with a conflict between his own opinions the slave correctly judges (and accepts as his own) the true opinion. What the slave demonstrates in this is the freedom of thought (here qualified as dependent on his initial belief about the nature of a square). What makes the opinions of the slave his own is his rational judgement and this is rational because it is free. Further, in order for the slave to disavow knowledge he must have an intuition of what knowing would be: an activity which is completely free, where even the hypotheses or beginning points are equally his own.

It is natural to be suspicious of Socrates' choice of mathematics in giving a demonstration of recollection to Meno. Given the content of the agreed starting point, reason can determine further true beliefs. But Socrates says that if the process of questioning were pursued, eventually all knowledge would be our possession. Can we so easily infer to ethical and other non-mathematical knowledge? The problem centers around how it is that thought has content. The dialogue presents three answers to this: as axioms laid down in the mathematics of the *elenchus*, as present in the soul but forgotten in the myth of recollection, and, in the concluding remarks of

Socrates, as a divine gift (99e ff.) Divine gifts are described as coming in two forms. Virtuous statesmen and inspired poets, priests and priestesses have a divine gift without understanding. Teiresias is said to have a divine gift *with* understanding. Plato's reference is to the *Odyssey* where Circe tells Odysseus that he will indeed get home, but only via an indirect route through Hades. There he will meet Teiresias to whom Persephone has given the divine gift of *nous*.⁷⁰ What is not presented is the option that there could be an empirical source of the content of thought. Each of the three options given in the *Meno* demands an inward turn to thought as prior to nature, though this does not mean that experience (and the conflicting opinions resulting from it) is not or could not be the occasion of that inward turn.⁷¹

The dialogue does not answer the skeptics' doubt about this inward turn - whether it will be or could be productive of knowledge. What the dialogue does is to motivate the turn: the *aporetic* state resulting from Socrates' questioning is what calls for it. The fruition of the inward turn is left as a suggestion at the end of the *elenchus* with the slave. That it remains a suggestion must mean that Plato does not consider mathematics to be a sufficient proof. It is a helpful illustration because in it we have entered the realm of pure thought, but it is deficient in that it remains dependent on the laying down of axioms.⁷² Thought, in relation to these as given, is

70. Homer, *The Odyssey*, Greek text with trans. by A.T. Murray, revised by G.E. Dimock, (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1995), X, 525 ff.

71. If this is correct, then we must view nature (the external, sensible realm) as the appearance of the intelligible.

72. The illustration proceeds within the realm of pure thought even though Socrates uses language and symbols drawn in the sand. These are images of the objects being discussed.

unfree. If we could begin with hypotheses but eventually return to these as known in relation to an unhypothetical principle, then we would have knowledge as demanded by Socrates. What is suggested here in the *Meno* is consistent with (one interpretation of) Plato's image of the line in *Republic*, VI. There, mathematical thinking (*dianoia*) is not an instance of *noesis* or *episteme* proper but is rather an image of it. If we take the levels of the line (from top to bottom) to be successively more external images of the Good, then the return to or recollection of the Good will involve the movement through each level. From belief, even justified true belief, one would have to move through mathematics to *episteme*. One might think that mathematics is being held up as an exemplar of knowledge in the *Meno*. But Socrates is careful to say that the slave's knowledge about mathematics "would be as accurate as anyone's" (85d). That is, to the extent that mathematical 'knowledge' approaches *episteme*, the slave could possess this. As mathematics in the *Republic* is an image of *episteme* so the *elenchus* in the *Meno* is an image of recollection. As image it is both like and unlike the imaged. It is like it in that thought's object has become thought itself. It is unlike it in that it remains dependent upon an hypothesis.

On returning to the question of virtue in the final section of the dialogue, Socrates characteristically wants to go straight to the principle (he wants first to know the nature of virtue). But Meno insists, and Socrates agrees, to what we might term a 'second best method' (86d ff.) like the *deuteros plous* of the *Phaedo* (99d) in which hypotheses about virtue are laid

Socrates points to a particular (image of a) square but no one suggests measuring this (*Meno*, 82c). Later Socrates makes it clear that the name "diagonal" is irrelevant. The slave boy knows what it is without being able to communicate this through language (85b).

down. What explains Socrates' willingness to lay down hypotheses about virtue is his confidence in the process of beginning with hypotheses and ending with (absolute) knowledge.⁷³ Without this confidence, the hypotheses might as easily be thought to obscure the truth as be the beginning of its revelation. The *Meno* gives us an account of how it is that we can move from opinion to knowledge: from the recognition of the deficiency of our opinions we desire to know.⁷⁴ The first step in fulfilling that desire is the laying down of hypotheses. The hypotheses laid down are like opinions in that they are given. They are unlike opinions in the self-consciousness of their givenness. The second step is, or requires, the transformation of these hypotheses. From opinion through hypotheses we rise to knowledge. This is a "rise" if, as presented in the *Republic*, the activity of knowing frees itself from its beginning point as given, that is, as a beginning point.

The demand that thought be free, that we possess an absolute knowledge, will necessitate a transformation of the myth of recollection itself. Without the intuition of absolute knowledge expressed in the myth we would never desire and so search for it. But the myth is deficient in its form as an image and in its relation to us as given. If reason makes the true content of the myth its own (as imaged in the slave boy making true opinions his own through his free rational

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73. Here we have a friendly Platonic amendment to Socrates' demand to know. Socrates can and should demand a knowledge in which thought (and so we) are completely free, but he, like Odysseus in the passage noted above, must take the long way round to this destination.
74. To be more precise: the soul is the activity of recollecting a content forgotten, it is moved by the desire to know, hence the dissatisfaction with the deficiency of opinion and so the desire to know *truly*.

judgement) it will cease to be myth.

I.3. Plato's Mature Project and Self-Criticism in the *Parmenides*

I.3.1. Overview

The *Parmenides* is a notoriously difficult dialogue to interpret.⁷⁵ In it Socrates presents a theory of Forms as an answer to problems raised by Parmenides' disciple and advocate Zeno.⁷⁶ This theory is then criticized by Parmenides, and Socrates is at a loss to find an adequate response to his criticisms. Finally Parmenides gives his own response in the form of a new dialectical method which treats of the 'one' and the 'many' ('the others'). What I will argue is that Plato is struggling to clarify and criticize his own project which has been developing from the early through the middle Platonic dialogues. Plato presents an overview of his project through a reference to the *Phaedo* where Socrates describes his intellectual development, culminating in an interpretation and transformation of Anaxagoras' philosophical project of determining *nous* as the cause of order in all things. Anaxagoras' project, as interpreted and

75. Sayer gives a helpful overview of the major strands of interpretation, though he does not do justice to the contributions of Aristotle and Hegel (K.M. Sayer, *Parmenides' Lesson: Translation and Explication of Plato's Parmenides* (Notre Dame: Univ. Of Notre Dame Press, 1996), xi-xx).

76. As with the *Meno* I will use 'Socrates,' 'Parmenides' and 'Zeno' to refer to the characters in the dialogue *Parmenides*. When referring to the historical philosophers or the character of Socrates in other dialogues I will note this unless it is obvious. Unless otherwise stated, citations of the *Parmenides* are from Plato, *Parmenides*, trans. M.L. Gill and P. Ryan, in *Plato: Complete Works*, ed. J.M. Cooper with D.S. Hutchinson (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co., 1997).

transformed, is the Platonic project, and the logic of this project is what Socrates describes as his 'second-best method.' Through some preliminary questioning Parmenides clarifies the intention of this method: it is to reveal the Good as the comprehensive cause of all that is other than it. Parmenides also clarifies what is demanded by the logic of the method: the Forms must be separate from what participates in them. The criticisms which Parmenides presents are intelligible and relevant only if these two clarifications are kept in mind. The criticisms focus on the separation of the Forms, but this is only a problem if one demands that they, as the necessary determinations of the Good, are the comprehensive cause of all else. I will argue that Plato criticizes his own method as failing to allow of a logical or scientific articulation. This failure centers around a separation of unity and difference which is presumed in the method. Plato's criticism points, not to an abandonment of the theory of Forms, but to a radical transformation of that theory such that there can be a concrete unity of unity and difference in the Forms and, ultimately, in the Good. The second section of the dialogue is a tentative step in this direction. What is moving it is the desire to understand how the Good, referred to by Parmenides as the 'one,' is effectively the principle of all things.

In order to establish that Plato is indeed presenting his own project and its logic, I will argue that the theory of Forms in the *Parmenides* is intended by Plato to be understood as the same theory as that found in the middle dialogues. In part this argument will involve a careful interpretation of the *Phaedo* where, I argue, Plato first explicitly announces his philosophical program. I will also argue that Plato thinks the criticisms leveled by Parmenides are proper to

his theory. They are not based on misconstruals of the theory, but are *aporiai* which Plato himself must work through in the service of his own project. I will then discuss the essential features of the theory as presented in the *Parmenides*. Following this I will limit my discussion to Parmenides' first criticism of the theory. When I discuss the consequences of this criticism I will make some claims about the broader consequences of Parmenides' criticisms as a whole and the nature of his response in the second section of the dialogue.

I.3.2. Preliminary Questions: Is the theory of Forms presented in the *Parmenides* Plato's theory of the middle dialogues? Are the criticisms leveled at it internal to Plato's theory?

I will make some general remarks about what is involved in the first two issues raised above (whether the theory of Forms in the *Parmenides* is the same as that in the middle dialogues and whether the criticisms of it are proper to the theory as stated in the *Parmenides*). Then I will present a partial answer to the second question, as this will be brief, before turning to an extended answer to the first question. As Sayer has noted, the *Parmenides* gives the most explicit and detailed discussion of a theory of Forms in the whole Platonic corpus.⁷⁷ It is an important question whether this theory of Forms is Plato's own (identical with that of the middle dialogues or contiguous with it) or is rather a misinterpretation of that theory, perhaps one present in the Academy, but not held by Plato.⁷⁸ The resolution of this question is important for

77. Sayer, 69.

78. It is important to keep in mind that to be the same theory it need not be identical, just as the theory of Forms in different middle dialogues can be the same theory even if developed or

modified. For an example of an interpreter who takes the criticisms to be suspect and based on misunderstandings of the theory of Forms, cf. William Prior, *Unity and Development in Plato's Metaphysics* (London: Croom Helm, 1985), 51-86. Prior's reading is summed up as follows: the criticisms "are not not conclusive refutations of the Theory of Forms as it is presented in the middle dialogues, because in order to be made into valid arguments they must be interpreted as containing premisses to which Plato is certainly not committed. On the other hand, they are not merely idle objections, for the premisses on which they rely are sufficiently similar to premisses to which Plato is in fact committed to create uncertainty about the nature of Plato's metaphysics" (*ibid.*, 83). For an example of an interpreter who takes the extreme position that in all probability the arguments of the *Parmenides* are not meant to be taken seriously (but rather to be taken as examples of rhetoric and eristic) cf. Paul Shorey, *The Unity of Plato's Thought* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1903, reprinted 1960), especially 57-60. For an example of an interpreter who thinks that a criticism is invalid (which could be interpreted as bringing out a misunderstanding of the theory), cf. Harold Cherniss, "The Relation of the *Timaeus* to Plato's Later Dialogues," in *Studies in Plato's Metaphysics*, ed. R. Allen (London: Routledge, 1965), 339-378 (cf. especially 360-378). Cherniss argues that one of the criticisms - that focused on the idea of Forms as *paradeigmata* (*Parmenides*, 132d-133a) is not a valid argument, and that Plato must have intended us to see this. The context of Cherniss' argument is his concern with refuting the claim of G. E. L. Owen that the *Timaeus* must have been written at a time prior to the late dialogues (including the *Parmenides*), for it presents Forms as *paradeigmata*, which Owen thinks is a bad theory and one given up by Plato from the time of the *Parmenides* on. See G. E. L. Owen, "The Place of the *Timaeus* in Plato's Dialogues," in *Studies in Plato's Metaphysics*, ed. R. Allen (London: Routledge, 1965), 313-338. Cherniss' thesis is that Plato consistently speaks of (and finds the need to think in terms of) both participation and image when treating of the relation of the phenomenal to the real in his works (the phenomenal and the real being a distinction which, Cherniss also argues, we must acknowledge to be consistently central to Plato). In contrast, Cherniss thinks that Owen gives an anachronistic reading of Plato: "These phrases of Owen's [about delivering "our interpretation of the critical dialogues from the shadow of the *Timaeus*" (the shadow of Forms as *paradeigmata*)] have their own interest for anyone who has followed the fascinating and perplexing history of Platonic interpretation, which has been so largely a series of insistently charitable efforts on the part of western philosophers and their acolytes, each to baptize Plato in his particular faith - having shriven him first, of course, by interpreting the heresies out of his works" (347). Of note, Cherniss is careful to argue that Plato often returns to problems in the use of 'likeness' with respect to the theory of ideas (375 ff.). Whether or not we agree with Cherniss that the criticism in the *Parmenides* aimed at Forms as *paradeigmata* is invalid, Plato's interest in the criticism is *prima facie* evidence for its *relevance*: we must face problems raised by the idea of 'likeness' if we are to give a fully rational articulation of the theory of Forms.

both the interpretation of the criticisms and for an assessment of their consequences. It is important for the interpretation of the criticisms because these are so concise and schematic. The plausibility judgements necessary to any interpretation of these criticisms will be informed by what we take to be Plato's theory and the motivation for that theory. As for the consequences of the criticisms, if one thinks that the theory of Forms in the *Parmenides* is not the same theory as that in the middle dialogues, then one's primary interest will be to see whether and how the theory of the middle dialogues does or does not fall prey to the same dilemmas. If, however, one thinks that the theory is the same, one's primary interest will be in understanding how the second section of the dialogue and also later Platonic dialogues are a response to these dilemmas.⁷⁹

Scholars have questioned the connexion between P1 and P2, even to the extent of suggesting that they were not originally sections of one dialogue written by Plato. My comment above about the response to the criticisms does not beg this question regarding the connexion of P1 and P2. If the theory is the same, one must first attempt to see how P2 could be a response to P1 before deciding whether they are ultimately connected or not. Because of its interpretative significance I will address the question of whether the doctrine of Forms presented in the *Parmenides* is indeed the same as the doctrine of the earlier dialogues, before turning to a discussion of the first criticism raised by Parmenides. I will argue that there is good evidence internal to the *Parmenides* that Plato intends the theory of Forms presented there to be understood to be the same theory as found in the middle dialogues. A complete defense of this would also require

79. For convenience I will refer to the first section of the *Parmenides* where a theory of Forms is presented and criticized as P1 (126-135c) and the second section where Parmenides introduces a new dialectical method as P2 (135c-end).

looking at the middle dialogues on their own and showing that what leads Plato's Socrates to lay down the Forms as an hypothesis and what the nature of these Forms is, is consistent with the theory stated in the *Parmenides*. I will touch on one aspect of this as it comes out in Socrates' intellectual autobiography in the *Phaedo*, because I think that the *Parmenides* explicitly points us to this in its introductory section. I will not, however, give an independent account of what the middle dialogues present as the problem with sensible things and/or our knowledge of these, and why Forms are thought to resolve this. This would require, among other things, a thorough discussion of Plato's understanding and response to the historical Parmenides as well as Heraclitus. One should note, however, that much interpretative work needs to be done even to state what the theory of Forms is in the middle dialogues (and indeed whether it should be thought of as a doctrine or not). If there is strong evidence that Plato thinks the theory as found in the *Parmenides* is the same, then the exposition and criticism of the theory in the *Parmenides* is an important guide to interpreting Plato's ideas in the middle dialogues.

As well as the question of the relation of the theory of Forms in the *Parmenides* to that in the middle dialogues, there is the question of the relation of the criticisms to the theory as stated in the *Parmenides*. Are these criticisms real problems of that theory or are they consequent on misinterpretations of it? Proclus, for instance, takes the first criticism to be of the latter variety, and many 20th c. commentators follow him in this.⁸⁰ A fully satisfying answer to this question

80. Proclus, *Proclus' Commentary on Plato's Parmenides*, trans. G.R. Morrow and J.M. Dillon (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1987), 226 ff.. He sees the first criticism as based on the mistake of taking Platonic Forms to be material things.

must rest on an interpretation of the nature of each criticism and hence an understanding of how each does or does not relate significantly to the theory of Forms as presented in the dialogue.

However, some initial remarks are in order. The same character (Socrates) who presents the theory also takes the problems seriously, and is perplexed about how best to answer them. For instance, at the end of the discussion of the first problem (131a-e) Parmenides asks: "Well then, Socrates, how are the other things going to partake of your forms, if they can partake of them neither in part nor as wholes?" Socrates replies "Really . . . it seems no easy matter to determine in any way." In the third (132d-133a) and fourth (133b-135c) problems Socrates assents to Parmenides' judgements of perplexity. Where Socrates' response is not simply such acknowledgment he suggests a revision (not a simple dismissal) of Parmenides' interpretation (with the day image at 131b and Forms as thoughts at 132b).⁸¹ His only reservation is with the

81. How one should divide the criticisms is not obvious. In this paper I follow Doull in dividing the problems raised into four as follows:

1) 131a-e: a criticism based on the idea that "you [Socrates] say there exist [*einai*] certain forms, of which these other things [*ta alla*] come to partake and so to be called after their names; by coming to partake of likeness or largeness or beauty or justice, they become [*gignesthai*] like or large or beautiful or just?" This results in a part/whole dilemma.

2) 132a-c: a criticism stemming from the idea that "each form is one on the following ground: whenever some number of things seem to you to be large, perhaps there seems to be some one character, the same as you look at them all, and from that you conclude that the large is one." This results in one kind of infinite regress.

3) 132d-133a: a criticism stemming from the idea that "forms are like patterns set in nature, and other things resemble them and are likenesses; and this partaking of the forms is, for the other things, simply being modeled on them." This results in another kind of infinite regress - often called the third man argument.

transition from his day image to Parmenides' sail image in the first problem (Socrates says that Parmenides' suggestion is "perhaps" a fair analogy, 131c). This makes it clear that Socrates is attempting to render participation intelligible, that is, to render the theory as presented in the *Parmenides* intelligible, in the light of Parmenides' criticisms. Socrates does not answer any of the problems raised by referring to the theory as he has presented it in the dialogue as opposed to the interpretation of what that theory involves which is implied in Parmenides' criticisms. It is only reasonable then, to read the problems as, for the Socrates of the dialogue, properly relevant to the theory he has just introduced and which Parmenides has clarified (with Socrates' assent).

I will now turn to the question of whether the theory of Forms in the *Parmenides* is the same as that in the middle dialogues. My focus will be on whether or not Plato intends it to be understood as the same (one might accept that he does but think that he is mistaken about his own views). I will argue that the details of the dialogue's prologue and of P1 support the claim

4) 133a-135c: a criticism stemming from Socrates positing "one form in each case every time you make a distinction among things." This results, as Doull interprets it, in the dilemma that "the sensible and intelligible worlds are incorrigibly separated and also are not separated" (J. Doull, "Plato's *Parmenides*," in *Philosophy and Freedom, The Legacy of James Doull* (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 2003), 94).

In particular, dividing the criticisms along the above lines means taking the discussion of forms as thoughts (132b-c) as part of the first kind of infinite regress. It also means taking Parmenides' questions about what there are Forms of (130b-e) as a preliminary clarification of Socrates' theory, rather than a first criticism of that theory (I will return to the significance of this point). For a defense of this reading, along with Doull's article see D.K. House, "The Criticism of Plato's Doctrine of Participation in *Parmenides*: A Propaedeutic to the Platonic Dialectic," in *Philosophy and Freedom, The Legacy of James Doull* (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 2003), 140-166.

that it is intended as the same theory. Most importantly, as mentioned, it is Socrates who introduces the theory in the *Parmenides*. It is almost universally accepted that the dialogue could not have had an historical precedent, hence Plato was free to choose any character to introduce the theory and discuss Parmenides' criticisms. Why then did he choose Socrates (rather than, say, a prominent member of the Academy)? Such choices are not arbitrary (at least the onus of proof surely lies with the interpreter who claims they are). They are an integral part of the philosophical argument.⁸² The simplest explanation for Plato's choice of Socrates in the *Parmenides* is that the theory articulated is the same as that which the Socrates of the middle dialogues has discussed, only here in a more explicit and developed form. This would also explain the presence in the *Parmenides* of Glaucon and Adeimantus, Plato's brothers and major interlocutors in the *Republic* (where they function to force Socrates to articulate his philosophical position - they are the characters in the *Republic* whose incessant questions bring out the need to introduce the theory of Forms). In the *Parmenides* they are present though silent. They are, therefore, as individuals, not needed to enable the dialogue to proceed. What is significant then, is their presence as an audience to the conversation. This is entirely appropriate if we, and they,

82. This has been argued persuasively, for example, in the case of the *Phaedo* by D.K. House and H-G. Gadamer. Though disagreeing in some respects, each has argued that Cebes and Simmias in the *Phaedo* are representative of a new generation of Pythagoreans espousing a scientific enlightenment and that this is significant in understanding the arguments about the immortality of the soul (D.K. House, "A Commentary on Plato's *Phaedo*," *Dionysius* V (1981) and H-G Gadamer, "The Proofs of Immortality in Plato's *Phaedo*," in *Dialogue and Dialectic: Eight Hermeneutical Studies on Plato*, trans. P.C. Smith (New Haven: Yale U. Press, 1980), 22-28). J. Doull has argued similarly with respect to the *Theaetetus* that the characterization and plot are not incidental to the philosophical argument (J. Doull, "A Commentary on Plato's *Theaetetus*," *Dionysius* I (1977): 5-47).

are going to see how the theory of Forms which emerged in the middle dialogues, in part as a response to them, is going to fare. Plato gives us no cues to suggest that Socrates, Glaucon and Adeimantus are only accidentally both here and in earlier dialogues.⁸³

The above dramatic choices on Plato's part make Socrates' self-identification with the theory in the *Parmenides* all the more significant. Socrates first introduces it with a rhetorical question addressed to Zeno and then explains why he thinks it answers Zeno's argument. That is, the theory is presented as having his philosophical assent (129a-130a). Later, Parmenides questions Socrates about the content of the theory and his responsibility for it. Socrates responds assertively that he himself has drawn the distinction between Form and participant, and that he believes that the Forms are apart from that which participates in them (130b). After further clarification about what has and what does not have a form, and a re-statement of the theory by Parmenides, Socrates again replies that this is the theory he affirms.⁸⁴ And in the midst of that

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83. Glaucon is in the two middle dialogues *Symposium* and *Republic*, Adeimantus is in the early dialogue *Apology* and the *Republic*. One might try to deny that these are the Glaucon and Adeimantus who are Plato's brothers and figure prominently in the *Republic*, but this is highly unlikely given the joint presence of two such named characters in both dialogues. Furthermore, while Plato is careful to describe the character Aristoteles in the *Parmenides* so that he will not be mistaken for Aristotle the philosopher, no such details are given as a way of distinguishing Glaucon and Adeimantus from Plato's brothers of the same names (127d).
84. (130a-131a). I will return to this. Parmenides seeks clarification about what he sees as a necessary consequence of the theory. Recognizing that the intention of the theory is that the Forms be the comprehensive causes of all becoming, he sees that this demands that nothing stand opposed to them (hair, dirt, mud are not some matter which is independent of the Forms).

clarification, Socrates says that he himself has from time to time wondered about Parmenides' question, whether hair, mud or dirt have a Form, as have rightness, beauty etc. (130c).

In the *Phaedo* (74-80a) a problem with sensible particulars is discussed and a solution is offered. *Prima facie* this closely parallels *Parmenides* 127d-130a. In the *Phaedo* Socrates raises as a problem that equal sticks and stones appear equal to one and unequal to another, while remaining the same (74b). In the *Parmenides* Zeno raises as a problem that "if things are many . . . they must be both like and unlike" (127e, as restated by Socrates).⁸⁵ In the *Phaedo* the solution involves the distinction between sensibles and Forms (79e). The Forms are what we attach the word 'itself' to (75d), we are said to have prior knowledge of them (75e) and they are said to exist prior to sensibles (76d). Each Form is described as being real, simple, by itself, remaining the same and never in any way changing (78d). No Form ever appears different from what it is (74b-c). We are given a description of a realm that is "pure, ever existing, immortal and unchanging" (79d) and "divine, deathless, intelligible, uniform, indissoluble, always the same as itself" (80a-b).⁸⁶ In contrast, sensible particulars are said to have "some deficiency in their being" (74d), they are spoken of as wanting to be like some other reality but falling short of this (74d-e) and as "never in any way" remaining "the same as themselves or in relation to each

85. Parmenides' later remark that Socrates is right to include intelligible objects in the discussion makes it clear that Zeno has in mind a sensible plurality at this point in the argument (135e).

86. From the context Socrates must be referring to a plurality of such pure, ever-existing etc. Forms.

other” (78e).⁸⁷ In the *Parmenides* Socrates admits that what Zeno says is true of sensibles but claims that Forms such as likeness and unlikeness which are only apprehended in reflection (130a) do not fall prey to his criticism (129a ff.). Sensibles are said to be in one way like and in another way unlike because they partake of likeness and unlikeness. But the forms themselves do not suffer contraries. Each is “just by itself” (128e-129a).

Exactly what the problem is, and how one should interpret the solution are hotly debated matters. It is not immediately apparent, for example, why a stick’s being tall with respect to one thing but short with respect to another is a problem at all. My point in drawing attention to the parallel treatments in the *Phaedo* and the *Parmenides* is not to argue that the best philosophical understanding of the problem and the solution stated in each has the same content. This is an important question, but too large for the present discussion. My point is that, given the striking parallel in the presentation of the problems and the solution offered, it would be very strange if Plato intended the theory of Forms in the *Parmenides* to be a different theory or a misinterpretation, but did not give an obvious indication of this.

There is one important and striking difference between the middle dialogues and the *Parmenides*: only in the latter are the Forms spoken of as separate (*choris*, for example at 129d). But it is significant that this term, which takes on a technical significance in the *Parmenides*, does not appear in Socrates’ first formulation of the theory in the dialogue at 128e-129c2. This

87. The last is stated as a rhetorical question.

formulation, taken on its own, is indistinguishable from formulations in earlier dialogues, except that it is given as one continuous account rather than being in the form of dispersed comments in a larger argument. In the first formulation the Form is referred to as *auto kath' hauto* (itself by itself) (128e), a familiar designation from the *Phaedo*. Directly after this formulation, Socrates re-states all the same points (that the many - for example sticks and stones - partake of Forms, and of contrary Forms; that this is not surprising; that, on the other hand, Forms simply are what they are; that it would be surprising if a Form were to suffer its opposite) but now Socrates expands on each of these points. It is here that he glosses *auta kath' hauta* (themselves by themselves) with *choris* (separate, apart). Immediately following this Parmenides' first question is whether Socrates himself has separated Forms from things that share in them (130b). Socrates responds 'yes.' This structure is consistent with what I have argued. Plato intends us to understand the theory under consideration to be the same theory as that in the middle dialogues. He therefore introduces it in its familiar form before developing its implications and difficulties.

There is, I think, only one literary detail which might be thought to cast doubt on the claim that the theory of Forms in the *Parmenides* is the same as the theory of the middle dialogues. This is the description of Socrates as being quite young when the conversation with Parmenides took place (127e). As with much in the dialogue it is not immediately obvious how we are meant to take this (indeed, we must accept that only plausible conjecture is open to us concerning this particular detail of the dialogue). One might think Socrates' youth is to be taken literally, or one might think it is meant to be taken suggestively to identify Socrates in the

Parmenides with the Socrates of the earliest dialogues. However, neither of these options is viable on close inspection. As Scolnicov points out, a literal reading would likely demand an age of eight years for Socrates.⁸⁸ This age is incompatible with his explanation of such a complex theory demanding technical language, the details of which he says have often troubled him. It is equally problematic to try to associate the Socrates of the earliest Platonic dialogues (as distinct from a later Socrates) directly with the Socrates of the *Parmenides*. There is nothing besides the remark about Socrates' youth to suggest that the theory as found in the *Parmenides* is somehow consistent with Socrates' early questioning but not consistent with his claims in the middle dialogues. How are we then to reconcile Socrates' 'youth' with his articulation and espousal of the theory of Forms in the *Parmenides*? James Doull has suggested that what Plato intends by this is that we are to take up the whole of Socrates' philosophical endeavors from the very beginning.⁸⁹ That is, that the discussion in the *Parmenides* is not related to only one moment in his philosophical development, to any one particular expression of a doctrine. One might wonder whether the figure of an old Socrates would better suggest this, but this is not necessarily the case. The image of an old Socrates might improperly suggest that what is at issue is a late doctrine which he (the character in Plato's dialogues) held and this might be taken to be unrelated

88. "... Zeno's floruit is placed by Apollodorus in Olympiad 79 (464-461 B.C.); cf. Diogenes Laertius IX 29 = 29 A1 DK. Plato has him come to Athens when he was 'nearing forty,' during the Great Panathenaea: i.e., in 462/1 B.C. But at that time Socrates was eight years old" (S. Scolnicov, *Plato's Parmenides* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 2003), 45 n.3).

89. J. Doull, "The Problem of Participation in Plato's *Parmenides*," *Dionysius* XIX (2001): 11-25 and "Plato's *Parmenides*."

to his earlier philosophical activity. The image of youth has in it the suggestion that there is a coherence to Socrates' development in the Platonic dialogues. That is to say that what is at issue is a way of thinking (or trying to think) that is to be found, first implicitly and undeveloped, later explicitly and developed throughout the dialogues prior to the *Parmenides*. Such a view makes sense of the centrality of the separation (*chorismos*) of the Forms in the *Parmenides* even though this technical term has not been used before of the Forms. As the middle dialogues draw out what has been implicit in Socrates' demand for knowledge in the early dialogues, so here, Plato is working out what has been implicit in the middle dialogues. To Doull's suggestion I would add that the 'youth' of Socrates also suggests the need for further development. I will argue in what follows that in the *Parmenides* Plato is dissatisfied with his 'second-best method' (*deuteros plous*) and is attempting to overcome its limitations. The significance of the image of Socrates' youth is then that thought, as it appears in Socrates, is as yet young or undeveloped. Further, I will argue that Plato takes very seriously the historical Parmenides' dictum that what cannot be thought cannot be. The dramatic effect is to present Parmenides as the wise teacher putting the brilliant but (as yet, philosophically) young pupil Socrates through dialectical paces. This makes sense if I am right to think that Plato is acknowledging the force of the historical Parmenides' demand. As the teacher judges the student so this dictum of Parmenides judges subsequent attempts to philosophize. That the youth of Socrates indicates a recognition on Plato's part of the inadequacy of his thinking is consistent with Parmenides' assessment of Socrates at the end of P1 where he praises him for his philosophical intentions but criticizes him as still too attentive to ordinary opinion: "... your eagerness for discussion is admirable ..." (130b) but "... you are

still young, Socrates, and philosophy has not yet taken hold of you so firmly as I believe it will someday. You will not despise any of these objects then, but at present your youth makes you still pay attention to what the world will think” (130e).

This last point is connected to a further reason to take the theory of Forms in the *Parmenides* as the same theory as that of the middle dialogues. In the course of Parmenides’ criticisms Socrates expresses honest perplexity, as noted earlier. This might be thought to be merely a conditional attitude: as if he were saying ‘accepting this theory, I do not see an answer to your criticism.’ But Socrates’ perplexity is not only conditional (if it were, that would be enough to establish my earlier point that the criticisms are relevant to the theory of Forms as presented in the *Parmenides*, but not my present claim that that theory is the same as the theory of the middle dialogues). When Parmenides sums up the final criticisms he asks Socrates: “What will you do about philosophy?” Socrates replies “I can see no way out at the moment” (135c). Socrates does not offer a different theory as a means of continuing to philosophize, which would be natural if he were convinced of having a better theory. Furthermore, he accepts as relevant Parmenides’ new method (practiced in P2), as strange and confusing as it is (135d ff.). The best explanation for this is that he truly sees no other way forward. This last point, in addition to supporting the claim that this is Plato's own theory, supports the further claim that we are not dealing with just one of many possible theories within philosophy, but are confronting the very nature of philosophizing itself.

I.3.3. The Philosophical Context of the Discussion Between Socrates and Parmenides as Implied by the Prologue of the *Parmenides*.

There is one final consideration supporting my contention that the theory of Forms in the *Parmenides* is the same as that in the middle dialogues. It is based on the opening lines of the dialogue. I have left this until last because it has, I will argue, also the more general significance of setting out the context and focus of the dialogue as a whole.

The Focus of the *Parmenides* is the question how it is possible to philosophize (that is, given an impasse in attempts to philosophize, how can philosophy proceed?). In the dialogue we have an account of the meeting of Zeno, Parmenides and Socrates twice removed: Antiphon gives an account of Pythodorus' account of the meeting. Pythodorus' account, as told by Antiphon, begins with the reading of Zeno's book. The conclusion of the book's argument is that there is no finite world of plurality and no thinking of such a world (127b ff.). Socrates responds with a theory of Forms which is intended to save the sensible and our ability to think it.⁹⁰

90. 128e ff. If my interpretation is correct, then it is a mistake for Gail Fine to introduce the discussion of the theory of Forms in the *Parmenides* as assuming the existence of a plurality of sensible finite things and, on this basis, addressing a limited puzzle about the compresence of opposites in things. She writes: "At the beginning of the *Parmenides*, Socrates says that forms are introduced to solve a puzzle raised by the fact that things are both one and many, like and unlike: Simmias, for example, is one man with many limbs; he is like some things and unlike others ... we can explain how sensibles can suffer compresence only by positing forms" ("Introduction," in *The Oxford Handbook of Plato* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 16). My view is that the question is much more fundamental: can we think (and so can there be) a world of plural finite things at all? Socrates presents the Forms as a plurality of true beings (in contrast to Parmenides' one

Parmenides then criticizes this theory and Socrates acknowledges in the final criticism that he has been brought to an impasse: if there are Forms as Socrates posits, they are of a divine world and for a divine knowledge in which we cannot participate; but if this is so (if Forms are beyond our world and our knowledge) then we have nothing on which to fix our thought and meaningful discourse will be destroyed (131a-135c). The remainder of the dialogue is occupied with a new dialectical method which Parmenides introduces as necessary to overcome Socrates' difficulties (135d-136d ff.). The above sequence lies within Antiphon's recital of Pythodorus' account of the conversation. Prior to this the dialogue contains a prologue in which a group of people from Clazomenae (the birth place of Anaxagoras) who are described as "deeply interested in philosophy" have traveled from their home to Athens specifically to hear Pythodorus' account.⁹¹ The journey from Asia Minor to Athens is a major one. It only makes sense for them to make it (given their explicit statement that they made it in order to hear the famous conversation) if the account given by Pythodorus promises to answer what is for them a burning philosophical question (126a-c). This would suggest that the question of the dialogue is also their question. If

being) and the sensible as thinkable in reference to the Forms. In stark contrast to my interpretation, Sandra Peterson gives (to my mind an untenable) deflationary interpretation of the opening parley between Socrates and Parmenides in the dialogue. She takes *eidos* ('form,' without capitalization, in her interpretation) to be no more than an 'aspect' of a thing, and Socrates to have a 3-pronged knock-down argument against Zeno's argument, based solely on ordinary linguistic usage and customary opinion, and so takes any introduction of a technical theory of forms as unnecessary in response to Zeno's challenge. See Sandra Peterson, "The Parmenides," in *The Oxford Handbook of Plato* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 383-410.

91. 126a ff.. For the biographical detail of Anaxagoras, see Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*, Greek text with trans. by R.D. Hicks (London: Loeb Classical Library, 1925), BK II.3 (p.135).

so, then Plato's point is that the relevance of the question of the dialogue is best understood from the perspective of these Clazomenaeans. That is, if we want to understand what the difficulty really is and so understand why Parmenides' new method is not just an eccentric response, but is philosophically relevant, we should ask what these would mean to the Clazomenaeans.⁹² Can we make this more precise? I think we can. Here I will be following the interpretation of James Doull. Doull's comments are extremely compact. He writes:

The reader of *Parmenides* should put himself in the place of the Clazomenian philosophers who have come to Athens to hear the great argument of Socrates with Zeno and Parmenides as recorded in the memory of Antiphon. From it they would learn what Anaxagoras had not made clear, how the *nous*, alone unmixed, could relate to the atoms in each of which were all difference, the endless process of separating their differences from the original mixture. Of the atoms in this endless process nothing could be said distinctly that would not show itself as other in further division.⁹³

What I do in the following is to express more explicitly what I take Doull's point to be. If this interpretation were based solely on the prologue it would only be a plausible suggestion. However, Doull supports his interpretation in so far as he reveals how the ensuing logic of P1 and P2 is found to embody it. I will not here follow this entire argument through. I will limit myself to augmenting what Doull has argued by articulating more precisely what it means to

92. Whether the result of P2 is purely negative or positive or, as Doull argues, is explicitly negative yet implicitly positive, it will nevertheless be philosophically compelling if it is seen to be the only way forward or, at a minimum, a plausible way forward from the *aporetic* result of P1.

93. "Plato's Parmenides," 83.

have a Clazomenaeian perspective and leave the final assessment of the relevance of this perspective for interpreting the dialogue to the reader.

The presence of Clazomenaeian philosophers would seem to be a straightforward reference to Anaxagoras and hence to the *Phaedo*, where he figures prominently in Socrates' intellectual autobiography.⁹⁴ In the *Phaedo* Socrates tells us of his excitement over hearing that Anaxagoras proposed *nous* as the principle of all things.⁹⁵ On being disappointed with Anaxagoras' working out of this project, Socrates offers his own method of pursuing that project as he (Socrates) has interpreted it and transformed it (I will say more in defense of this reading of the dialogue in what follows). It is reasonable then to take the Clazomenaeian philosophers as present in the *Parmenides* because of their interest in seeing how successful Socrates' method is

94. Anaxagoras' book is mentioned in the *Apology* (26e) and Anaxagoras himself (or his thought) is mentioned in passing in the following dialogues: the *Phaedrus* (as teaching Pericles about mind and mindlessness, 270a), the *Cratylus* (*nous* as ordering all things, 400a, with respect to theories about the moon, 409a-b, *nous* as having absolute power, being unmixed and ordering all things, 413c) and the *Gorgias* (his principle of 'all things mixed,' 465d). However, it is in the *Phaedo* that his thought is given a prominent place and discussed at length.

95. "One day I heard someone reading, as he said, from a book of Anaxagoras, and saying that it is Mind [*nous*] that directs and is the cause of everything. I was delighted with this cause and it seemed to me good, in a way, that Mind should be the cause of all" (97b-c). The historical Anaxagoras proposed that *nous* was infinite, self-ruling, mixed with nothing, absolutely separated off, alone by itself, and that it ruled everything. Its action on 'all things mixed' explained the world we encounter (DK fragments 1 and 12, G.S. Kirk and J.E. Raven, *The Presocratic Philosophers* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1971) #495, p.368, #503, p.372). In this ontology Anaxagoras abides by the Eleatic thought that 'nothing comes from nothing.' In the *Phaedo* Socrates only speaks of Anaxagoras' principle, *nous*, and I will limit my discussion to this. It is interesting, however, that what Aristotle refers to as Plato's principles of the One and Dyad (for example, at *Metaphysics*, Book *Alpha*, chs. 6 and 9) are structurally similar to Anaxagoras' two principles, *nous* and 'all things mixed.'

in fulfilling Anaxagoras' project (in the form in which Socrates has taken it on). Hence the first section of the dialogue (P1) should be read as Plato's own critique of how well the 'second-best method' fares and P2 should be read as Plato's first response to this criticism.

In the following I will give support for the summary view stated above, and in so doing articulate what I take to be the most reasonable interpretation of what the Platonic project is (that is, what Plato's conception of philosophy is) and its resulting logic. The intellectual autobiography given by Socrates in the *Phaedo* is especially significant because it is a rare case in which Socrates pauses from pursuing particular arguments or lines of questioning in order to speak to the general motivation of his questioning and also of the theories he comes to express in the middle dialogues.⁹⁶

What initiates Socrates' autobiographical account in the *Phaedo* is Cebes' objection that Socrates has not yet adequately established that the soul is immortal and indestructible (87a-88c, 91d, 95b-e). Socrates responds by saying that an adequate answer would require nothing less than "a thorough investigation of the cause of generation and destruction" (96a), that is, an explanation of all becoming. He then proceeds to give his own attempts to grasp this explanation. Socrates' discussion suggests that the scope of what demands an explanation is

96. My comments will be restricted to the philosophical content of this autobiography, understood as the autobiography of the character in Plato's dialogue, not the historical Socrates independent of this, though, as J.N. Findlay notes, Xenophon's account of the historical Socrates is very similar (J.N. Findlay, *Plato and Platonism*, 92).

universal. It includes the following: math (how ten is more than eight, 96e), the relation of one particular to another (how one man is taller than another, 96e), nature (the movements of the moon and other heavenly bodies, 98a), and human action (why Socrates has remained in prison, 98c). In each case Socrates is seeking an explanatory, causal account. The accounts given in ‘natural science’ are found wanting (96a-e) but he was excited by the reports about Anaxagoras’ teaching (97c ff.).⁹⁷ This is not just the excitement of being promised an answer, it is the excitement of finding the right kind of answer. Socrates tells us that he was happy to find “in Anaxagoras a teacher about the cause of things after my own heart” (97d). What is especially instructive is what Socrates tells us he expected from Anaxagoras’ account before he came to know its details, since this is a clear indication of what Socrates had been searching for as a sufficient answer (what ‘the cause of things after my own heart’ is). On hearing that Anaxagoras taught that *nous* “directs and is the cause of everything” (97c) Socrates infers that *nous* must be the Good: “I thought that if this were so, the directing Mind would direct everything and arrange each thing in the way that was best” (97c). *Nous* does not simply know what is best, it is identified with the best as each thing’s end: “If then one wished to know the cause of each thing, why it comes to be or perishes or exists, one had to find what was the best way for it to be, or to be acted upon, or to act” (97c-d). Further, Socrates identifies rational necessity with the Good: he assumes that Anaxagoras would first say “whether the earth is flat or round, and then would

97. Aristotle expresses similar enthusiasm about Anaxagoras: “When one man said, then, that reason was present - as in animals, so throughout nature - as the cause of order and of all arrangement, he seemed like a sober man in contrast with the random talk of his predecessors” (Aristotle, *Metaphysica*, trans. W.D. Ross in *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, ed. R. McKeon (New York: Random House, 1941), Book *Alpha*, ch. iii, 884b 14-17).

explain why it is so of necessity, saying which is better, and that it was better to be so” (97e).

Socrates’ interpretation of Anaxagoras’ project leads him to expect from Anaxagoras the articulation of one comprehensive cause which would render a teleological explanation of all things, explaining what is “best for each” and “the common good for all” (98a), where what is best is what is rational. Because of this it makes sense for Socrates to say that “if he [Anaxagoras] showed me these things I should be prepared never to desire any other kind of cause” (98a). This is not simply a statement about arbitrary personal interest. No other kind of cause would be necessary because this would be a unified comprehensive account. It is important to note that Socrates is not simply demanding one kind of causal explanation, where the cause in each case would be different but analogous. Anaxagoras’ *nous* is one and this unity is never contested by Socrates.⁹⁸ It is because of this that Socrates can unproblematically assume a connexion between the end of each thing and the common good (as at 98b).

Upon reading Anaxagoras, Socrates tells us that he was disappointed because “the man made no use of Mind” but rather offered a plurality of “strange things” as causes (98b-c). His appraisal of Anaxagoras is not that his project was flawed, but that he did not follow it through. It is significant (and a confirmation of the above point) that Socrates’ illustration of Anaxagoras’ fault uses an example of self-conscious action. He says that it is as if Anaxagoras has given as

98. The character of Socrates in the dialogue can know that Anaxagoras’ principle (*nous*) is one without knowing, as Plato must, Anaxagoras’ conception of it as pure and unmixed. There may be room to question Socrates’ adherence to a single first principle, though I think that the lack of any criticism of the unity of Anaxagoras’ *nous* as the ultimate cause speaks strongly against any such interpretation.

the cause of Socrates being in prison various necessary conditions of this state of affairs, but not the true cause, which is that it seemed best to Socrates that he so act.⁹⁹ The explanations given by Anaxagoras which Socrates' example is meant to criticize are explanations about the natural world (the movements of the moon etc.). Assuming we do not take this as a glaring non sequitur (his taking as analogous natural change and self-conscious action), Socrates is reinforcing one aspect of Anaxagoras' project which had excited him, namely that it would be, not just any causal account, but a teleological account of all things. Socrates concludes his criticism of Anaxagoras by re-iterating that he would "gladly become the disciple of any man who taught the workings of that kind of cause" (99c).

What follows this in the *Phaedo* is a crucial statement, though one not without interpretative ambiguity: ". . . since I was deprived and could neither discover it myself nor learn it from another, do you wish me to give you an explanation of how, as a second best [*deuteros plous*], I busied myself with the search for the cause, Cebes?" (99c-d). The important interpretative question is whether Socrates means that he has given up on this specific causal principle (Anaxagoras' *nous* as interpreted by Socrates) or that he has given up on trying to have an immediate grasp of it. The standard translation of '*deuteros plous*' (literally 'second sailing') as 'second best method' opts for the latter interpretative choice.

99. "That seemed to me much like saying that Socrates' actions are all due to his mind, and then in trying to tell the causes of everything I do, to say that the reason that I am sitting here is because my body consists of bones and sinews . . ." (98b-e).

This choice is crucial. Is the method Socrates describes simply another (a different) method? If it is, it might turn out to be the best or only method. Whatever success it has might be taken to be an indirect criticism of earlier attempts to attain a true and satisfying knowledge. On the other hand, is Socrates' method a provisional method, laid down as the only way Plato can see how we can continue in our search for true, scientific knowledge (*episteme*)? The usual translation of '*deuteros plous*' is, I will argue, justified by its context in the *Phaedo*. This is further supported by its consistency with the central epistemological and metaphysical images in the *Republic*.

In the *Phaedo* Socrates is enthusiastic about Anaxagoras' project of showing that *nous* is the one comprehensive cause of everything.¹⁰⁰ He equates this with the Good, linking rational necessity and teleological explanation (97c-98b). As mentioned previously, Socrates never criticizes this project. What he does criticize is Anaxagoras' attempt to articulate the causality of the Good. That is, he criticizes the method of explanation which Anaxagoras in fact uses, but not the stated goal of that method (97b-99d). Furthermore the force of the criticism of Anaxagoras' method depends on an acceptance of the overall project. Anaxagoras is said to have failed to articulate the true cause - *nous* as a teleological principle - giving instead what are merely necessary conditions of things (98b-99d). When Socrates first describes (and interprets) Anaxagoras' project he says "if he [Anaxagoras] showed me those things I should be prepared

100. In this section, where I argue that the *deuteros plous* is properly thought of as a 'second-best method' I will be somewhat repetitive in my references to the *Parmenides*. I do this because it is so important to be clear about this interpretative question.

never to desire any other kind of cause” (97e-98a).¹⁰¹ Then, at the end of his criticism of Anaxagoras, Socrates re-iterates that he “would gladly become the disciple of any man who taught the workings of that kind of cause [Anaxagoras’ *nous*]” (99d). In this, Socrates expresses explicitly the desire to know *nous*, understood as the Good, directly. But he says that he was “deprived” of this knowledge, being unable to discover it by himself or from anyone else. He therefore turned to a “*deuteros plous*” (99d). This would, *prima facie*, seem to be a second-best method as is commonly thought. However, suppose one wants X, finds one cannot determine a way to possess it, and turns to Y instead. The question remains: is a desire for X still motivating the choice of Y, or has the desire for X been given up as impossible? The latter might appear to be the case in the *Phaedo* because the Good is listed as a Form alongside other Forms which are causes (100b). But this is not incompatible with seeing Plato’s Socrates as having taken on Anaxagoras’ general project (interpreted and transformed) of knowing everything as caused by *nous*/the Good. Socrates lays down three hypotheses: the Forms, sensible individuals, and participation (100b ff.). These are intended to be an indirect way of understanding the causality of the Good. In this indirect approach we cannot avoid talking about the Good, even if we do not (yet) understand how it is a comprehensive cause. From within such an indirect method, the Good may then appear to be one cause of many. That it is not simply this is indicated by the fact that Socrates introduces his method as his way of searching for “the cause” (singular)¹⁰² and his

101. Given his emphasis on understanding the necessity of things being the way they are, we cannot take this as an arbitrary limitation of Socrates’ interests, as noted above, but rather must take it as a claim that such an explanation would be exhaustive.

102. It would be possible to take this to mean ‘one [kind of] cause’ since Socrates has just been contrasting teleological explanation with the listing of necessary conditions. But the larger

re-iteration of his enthusiasm for Anaxagoras' project immediately prior to describing the details of his *deuteros plous* (99d). Indeed, the discussion of Anaxagoras really comes as part of the explanation of the *deuteros plous*. This is easily overlooked. The discussion of Anaxagoras is not included with the discussion of Socrates' failed attempts to understand the causes of everything (96a-97b). Rather, it is part of the answer to these failures. This answer is what Socrates calls a "confused method" of his own (97b). The explanation of this falls into two parts: first a discussion of Anaxagoras' project (97b-98d); second a discussion of the hypotheses laid down by Socrates (99d-102a). The first part gives us the basic intention or regulative ideal; the second part gives a method intended to live up to this regulative ideal. Without the former, the hypotheses would enter Socrates' account here in an arbitrary fashion.

The three central images of the *Republic* continue to emphasize Anaxagoras' project as interpreted and transformed by Socrates. In the *Republic* Socrates says the sun is the offspring of the Good (506e) and that "What the Good itself is in the world of thought in relation to the intelligence and things known, the sun is in the visible world, in relation to sight and things seen" (508b-c). The sun "not only provides visible things with the power to be seen but also with coming to be, growth, and nourishment, although it is not itself coming to be" (509b). Likewise "not only do the objects of knowledge owe their being known to the Good, but their being is also due to it, although the Good is not Being but superior to it in rank and power" (509b). The Good

context, as an noted earlier, which is a discussion of Anaxagoras' single, comprehensive *nous* suggests that a singular cause is meant.

is not one object of knowledge nor one cause among many. It is the cause of every object of knowledge and of its being known. This remains consistent with the project of the *Phaedo* as I have expressed it.

In the *Republic* it might be thought that Socrates is suggesting two principles, one of the sensible and one of the intelligible, and hence two different worlds, thus challenging my claim of consistency between the *Phaedo*'s project (with its one comprehensive principle promising a systematic explanation of all becoming) and the *Republic*. But when Socrates speaks of the sun as the 'offspring' of the Good this is not merely a metaphor suggesting likeness. In the image of the cave, which unites the two previous images of the sun and the line, Socrates makes it clear that we are to take 'offspring' literally:

. . . the Form of the Good is the last to be seen, and with difficulty; when seen it must be reckoned to be for all the cause of all that is right and beautiful, to have produced in the visible world both light and the fount of light, while in the intelligible world it is itself that which produces and controls truth and intelligence (517c).

There is then, only one first principle, and that is the Good.

What leads up to the image of the sun in the *Republic* is Socrates' argument that the "Good is the greatest object of study" and that "If we do not know it, even the fullest possible

knowledge of other things is no help to us.”¹⁰³ Hence the constitution of the city will be perfectly ordered when its rulers know the Good (506a-b). Socrates makes these claims even though he acknowledges that he does not know the nature of the Good itself (506d-e). This makes sense in the light of Socrates having taken on and transformed Anaxagoras’ project.

The image of the divided line in the *Republic* is also consistent with a determination to see Anaxagoras’ project succeed, and so with taking the *deuteros plous* as a second-best method.¹⁰⁴ There the hypothesis of the Forms, and the knowledge attained by this, is confined to the penultimate section of the line, and is judged to be deficient.¹⁰⁵ The ultimate section of the line begins with the hypothesis of the Forms, as does the penultimate section, but it treats the Forms *as* hypotheses in order to move to an unhypothetical first principle (510b-511e). If the

103. 505a. The translation is Reeve's. Plato, *Republic*, trans. G.M.A. Grube, revised by C.D.C. Reeve (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co., 1992).

104. Socrates introduces the line as a further explication of the analogy of the sun (509d). This makes sense because he has just said (509b ff.), in effect, that the sun is what unifies (what he will discuss as) the sides of knowing and being in the two lower sections of the line while the Good unifies the sides of knowing and being in the two upper sections, hence the Good and the sun are spoken of as “reigning” over their respective realms (509d), with the qualification that, ultimately, we understand the Good to be the cause of the sun, and so the one unifying principle of the entire line.

105. Socrates agrees with Glaucon’s summary that “you [Socrates] wish to distinguish the intelligible reality contemplated by the science of dialectic [in the ultimate section of the line] as clearer than that viewed by the so-called sciences [in the penultimate section of the line], for which their hypotheses are first principles. The students of these so-called sciences are, it is true, compelled to study them by thought and not by sense perception, yet because they do not go back to a first principle but proceed from hypotheses, you do not think that they have any clear understanding of their subjects, although these can be so understood if approached from a first principle” (511c-d).

deuteros plous were not a second-best method, that is, a method by which we attempt to indirectly know the Good as the first principle, then there would be no reason for the line not to end at the penultimate section. That is, the Forms would remain as the most primitive assumption, beyond which we could not progress. (This is, in fact, where many interpreters of Plato rest.) It is not unreasonable to speak of a ‘theory of Forms’ in the middle dialogues. But it is a theory which is explicitly provisional, conceived of as providing an insufficient knowledge which is nevertheless on the way to *episteme* proper.¹⁰⁶

I.3.4. An Overview of Some Important Features of the Theory of Forms as Found in the *Phaedo*

If I am correct in understanding the theory of Forms as a second-best method then we must say that Socrates has taken on Anaxagoras’ project, not dismissed it (or that Anaxagoras’ project as interpreted by Socrates expresses what Socrates understands himself to have been moved by, explicitly or implicitly, all along). It would be correct then to speak of Anaxagoras’ project, interpreted and transformed by Socrates, as the Platonic project. This is significant in explaining the motivation for the theory of Forms and also in guiding us in interpreting what Socrates goes on to say about the nature of Forms when he explains his *deuteros plous* at *Phaedo*

106. Socrates is clear that one should not work out what follows from hypotheses and at the same time question those hypotheses (*Phaedo*, 101d). The middle dialogues concentrate on the former. Hence it can seem that Plato is asserting a theory of Forms as a basic doctrine, rather than as a step on the way to knowledge of the first principle. But one should keep in mind Aristotle’s warning that one must always be aware of whether one is moving to first principles or from them (*Ethica Nicomachea*, I.4, 1095a30).

100a-105c.

In the *deuteros plous* Socrates lays down three hypotheses: Forms, things (or sensibles), and participation. I take it that by ‘thing’ (as the Greek is usually translated)¹⁰⁷ Socrates is referring to what ordinary opinion would designate as a thing. It is whatever there is, if there is anything, besides the Forms. I use the term ‘sensible’ interchangeably with ‘thing’ since earlier in the *Phaedo* sensible objects are laid down as an hypothesis in the sense that it is assumed they have some kind of being (as opposed to a Zeno or a Parmenides who would not countenance this). That they are laid down as an hypothesis does not mean they are free of the need for an explanation. The third hypothesis (participation) is the acknowledgment of this, as yet unspecified, explanation.

In the *Phaedo* Socrates emphasizes three points regarding the nature of Forms: they are causes, they are absolutely and immediately self-identical, and their being is not derivative. He also notes that he is not introducing anything new into this account of Forms (110b).¹⁰⁸ The issue

107. There is no technical word for such ‘things’ in the middle dialogues because they are already given as the objects of ordinary opinion. English translations use ‘thing’ where the Greek text often simply implies this, as in ‘*ti estin*’ (100c4): “some [thing] is” and *hekaston* (101c3): “each [thing]” as in “And you would loudly exclaim that you do not know how else *each thing* can come to be except by sharing in the particular reality in which it shares, and in these cases you do not know of any other cause of becoming two except by sharing in Twoness . . .” (Italics mine, *Phaedo*, 101c2-3).

108. In his account Socrates dismisses other ‘sophisticated’ causes. This does not mean that he allows for some third class of unsophisticated cause. This is made clear by his giving as an example of a sophisticated cause that bright color or shape should be the cause of the beauty of a thing (100d). Socrates’ use of ‘sophisticated’ should therefore be taken as an

of immediate importance for us is not whether one ultimately can make sense of Forms or whether they are in truth as Socrates describes them. What is important for our discussion is what Socrates intends to be the logic of his *deuteros plous*.

The three aspects of the nature of Forms are each contained in Socrates' first introduction to the Forms:

I am going to try to show you the kind of cause with which I have concerned myself. I turn back to those oft-mentioned things and proceed from them. I assume the existence of a Beautiful, itself by itself, of a Good, and a Great and all the rest. If you grant me these and agree that they exist, I hope to show the cause as a result . . . (*Phaedo*, 100b).

That the Forms are causes is the point most clearly made by Socrates. What is other than the Forms is what it is for no other reason than its participation in the Forms: “. . . if there is anything beautiful besides the Beautiful itself, it is beautiful for no other reason than that it shares in the Beautiful, and I say so with everything” (100c). The reference to ‘everything’ is important: to the extent that anything is (i.e. that anything is some determinate thing) it is so by virtue of participating in Forms.¹⁰⁹ Socrates' point that things get their names by sharing in Forms is not an

ironic way of saying 'spurious.' Socrates is, then, denying any other kind of cause.

109. For example, the “bigger is made bigger by nothing else than by Bigness, and that is the cause of its being bigger . . .” (101a). Socrates calls this account the “safest answer” (100d). It is refined in what he calls “another safe answer” (103c-105c). Briefly put, he distinguishes between a thing's nature which it has by participation in a Form and what is necessarily true of it by virtue of necessary relations between Forms (for example, anything which is three must also be odd) and he allows that something can be hot because of the presence of fire, which necessarily partakes of the hot (fire ceases to be fire if it ceases to

independent point but one consequent on the causality of the Forms (see for example, 102b). The theory of Forms is not merely a theory about *our* conceptualization of the world. Because the explanatory power of the Forms is assumed by Socrates to be comprehensive, he is lead to say “I no longer understand or recognize those other sophisticated causes . . .” (100c). It is not just that other kinds of causes are not understandable, they are not necessary and hence do not need to be recognized. If the theory of Forms is a ‘second-best method,’ that is, an indirect way of knowing the Good as cause of all things, then it is correct to speak of them, as Doull does, as “the necessary determinations of the Good.”¹¹⁰ They are its *determinations* in that we know the Good through them and this is a knowledge of what the Good must be. We know them as *necessary* determinations because they are what we must postulate in order to explain the causality of the Good.

Here (and elsewhere) Socrates uses the phrase ‘itself by itself’ (*auto kath’ hauto*) to describe the being of each Form (see, for example, *Phaedo*, 100b). What is meant by this phrase has been a matter of dispute among scholars (and relates to disputes about how to take the Greek word *einai* - ‘is’ - as I will argue in what follows), however, the context here suggests that it refers both to the self-identity of the Form and its unconditioned being or reality. The former point is made in contrast to sensibles. Forms do not admit of contraries while sensibles do. For

partake in the hot). These further qualifications do not affect the three basic points about the nature of Forms which I am concentrating on.

110. See “Plato’s *Parmenides*.”

example: “It [the Form Tallness] is not willing to endure and admit shortness and be other than it was, whereas I admit and endure shortness and still remain the same person and am this short man” (102e, see also 103b). Each Form is simply what it is. Socrates denies this of sensibles - Simmias’ being taller than Socrates is not due to Simmias’ nature, but due to his participation in what is other than him - the Form Tallness (102b). The immediate self-identity of the Forms lives up to the demand of Parmenides that we cannot say/think that what is is not nor that what is not is.¹¹¹ So too it lives up to the demand of Parmenides’ disciple Melissus that ‘if there are many they would have to be as the One is.’¹¹² In contrast to this, sensibles are and are not the Forms which are their truth or reality.¹¹³ This explains why Socrates described them earlier as deficient (*endeestera*, 75b2).¹¹⁴

The self-identity and causality of the forms are indisputable aspects of the *deuteros plous*. The third aspect - that the being of the Forms is not derivative - is more susceptible to interpretative dispute. My claim is that if the theory of Forms is indeed a ‘second-best method’

111. Kirk and Raven. See DK Fragments 2 (#344, p.269), 6 (#344, pp. 270-1), 7 (#346, p.271), 8 (#347, p.273).

112. Kirk and Raven. DK Fragment 8 (#392, p. 304). House makes this argument in “The Criticism of Plato’s Doctrine of Participation in Parmenides: A Propaedeutic to the Platonic Dialectic.”

113. This point is lost if one does not keep in mind the complete ontological dependence of the sensible on the Forms.

114. There are two related issues. First: a sensible is and is not its Form/the Forms it participates in. Second: a sensible partakes of many Forms, some of which are contraries (the sensible is tall and short). The second can lead us to recognize the first (as what makes it possible). The first is what is fundamental to the lack of self-identity of the sensible.

(an indirect way of knowing the Good) then the most natural reading of *Phaedo* 99d-105c is that it lays down the Forms as primary, absolute beings which cause whatever is not a Form to be what it is.¹¹⁵ This accords with the manner in which Socrates lays down his hypotheses. First the Forms are laid down, then Socrates moves to what is not a Form and its relation to the Forms (100b-d). That is, we do not have Forms and sensibles laid down as independent hypotheses which then each need to be related to the other (as if they were coeval principles). If this were so the relation would be symmetrical, but it is not. Participation is presented as an asymmetrical relation - we do not need it to have the Forms, we do need it to have the sensibles.

115. Along with the question of whether Plato is or is not working out a project which is prefigured in Anaxagoras' project, an element in the dispute about a Form being 'itself by itself' is the question of whether we can and should disambiguate different uses of *einai* in Plato (as the 'is' of identity, of predication, and of existence). This is often assumed as a matter of course in the scholarly literature, but is, I think, not an unproblematic interpretative assumption. If, for instance, for Plato 'to be' is 'to be determinate' then the 'is' of existence and the 'is' of predication are not independent. Similarly, if Plato is working under the influence of a Parmenidean criterion of what real/true being is, and if this leads him to postulate a diversity of self-identical beings in contrast to things whose existence and nature are somehow parasitical on the former, then the 'is' of existence and the 'is' of identity are not independent. We may be lead to say that a Form is itself while a thing is and is not itself, and that the Form is thereby more real. The separation of an 'is' of existence from the 'is' of identity and the 'is' of predication lends itself to the idea that something either simply exists or does not. This might seem to bring clarity to the interpretative task, but it may in fact obscure what Plato is saying if his idea in the 'second-best method' necessitates a distinction between something being more or less real. If the different aspects of 'is' are not thoroughly independent then we cannot take 'itself by itself' to mean simply that we consider (subjectively) something as if it were separate or as an abstraction. It must have both an epistemological and metaphysical significance. (For a different but interesting criticism of the discussions in the recent literature on Plato's use of the verb 'to be' see A. Morgenstern, "Leaving the verb 'to be' behind: an alternative reading of Plato's *Sophist*," *Dionysius* XIX (2001): 27-50.)

I.3.5. The Presentation and Criticism of the Theory of Forms in the *Parmenides*

I have argued that the *deuteros plous* is properly thought of as a ‘second-best method’ and that in it we are to understand the Forms as self-identical, primary beings which are the causes of all else. That is, in the *Phaedo* we have an expression of the Platonic project: a unified teleological explanation of everything, and also of the Platonic logic (the structure of explanation which is no less the structure of reality): the hypotheses of Forms, sensibles or participants, and participation. Socrates’ hope is that through the Forms we will be able to understand the relation of the many to the Good, that is, to explain why the many are as they are because of the Good.¹¹⁶ The Good, in this account, is not an abstraction, it is the first principle. It is what most truly is, and it is the comprehensive explanation of what is other than it. I spoke earlier of the Clazomenaeon perspective on the question of the *Parmenides* (which I argued was the question how it is possible for philosophy to proceed). We are now in a position to say more precisely what this perspective is: they want to know how the Good is productive. Anaxagoras had claimed that it (the first principle, determined only as *nous* by him) was productive but he had been unable to articulate how it was so in logical or scientific terms. Socrates has promised just such a science in his ‘second-best method.’ The first section of the *Parmenides* examines this method to see if it really is a science. The need for this examination was noted in the *Phaedo* but could not be followed up on (101d). Socrates there argued that one must not follow out the consequences of hypotheses and examine those hypotheses at the same time. The middle

116. On this see Doull, “Plato’s *Parmenides*.”

dialogues pursue the former task. Now the *Parmenides* begins the latter. The Clazomenian interest is what unites the *Parmenides* as a whole: P1 criticizes the ‘second-best method’ for not rendering a satisfactory, rational account of how the Good, out of itself, is productive of all else; P2 then makes a new attempt to render a coherent account of this (in the terminology of P2, it attempts to understand how the ‘one’ is effectively the principle of the ‘other’).¹¹⁷

In P1 the ‘second-best method’ is introduced by Socrates in response to Zeno’s challenge that the finite cannot be thought and cannot be. Socrates intends to save the finite by showing how, in his ‘second-best method,’ it can be thought. For Plato, this is the same as showing how the Good is effectively the principle of what is other than it.¹¹⁸ This means that the problems encountered in P1 are, as Doull remarks, peculiarly Platonic problems.¹¹⁹ This does not mean that one aspect or another cannot be isolated and treated coherently as if it were Plato’s sole interest. As an example, in his monograph on the dialogue, Scolnicov argues that in the *Parmenides* “The problems of forms and sensible things and of the communion of forms among themselves are

117. For a defense of this interpretation of P2 see Doull, “The Problem of Participation in Plato’s *Parmenides*” and “Plato’s *Parmenides*.”

118. What I have been arguing is that the presence of the Clazomenaeans and the reference to the *Phaedo* and Socrates’ taking on and developing Anaxagoras’ project reveals that the above two tasks (saving the finite and showing how the Good is productive) are one and the same for Plato.

119. “The difficulties *Parmenides*, from 131a-135c in the dialogue named after him, brings before Socrates about ‘participation’ or the relation of ‘the many’ to the ‘Eide’ need first to be set carefully in the argument up to that point. They are difficulties peculiar to the Platonic philosophy, and are certain to be found unintelligible if considered in the light of an Aristotelian or some modern logic.” (Doull, “The Problem of Participation in Plato’s *Parmenides*,” 11).

special cases of the problem of the one and the many.”¹²⁰ It is of course true that the dialogue has in it the abstract problem of the logical relation of a one to a many. This lies within the problem that is facing Plato, but it is not the whole of that problem.¹²¹

The structure of P1 after the introductory dramatization of the dialogue is as follows. It is reported that Zeno has given a reading of his book with Socrates present and we are told that Zeno re-reads his first argument at Socrates’ request. Socrates then gives his own summary of the book’s import which Zeno agrees is accurate:

If things are many, [you say], then they must be both like and unlike; but that this is impossible. For what is unlike cannot be like, nor what is like unlike? - is that not your meaning? . . . And if it is impossible for what is unlike to be like and what is like unlike, it is impossible that there be many? For if there were many, impossibilities would be attached. Then is this the purport of your arguments - nothing other than to contend that there is no plurality, contrary to everything people say?” (127e).¹²²

There follows an interchange between Socrates and Zeno to clarify Zeno’s intent to be arguing

120. Scolnicov, 59.

121. For Scolnicov the problem is the abstract one of relating any one to a many; for Plato the problem is relating, not just any one but *the* One/Good to the many. That is, for Scolnicov it is a problem of our conceptual scheme, for Plato it is a problem that is both conceptual and metaphysical at once.

122. The translation is that of Sayer (4). The Greek is ambiguous. In the first sentence Socrates could be referring to a statement of Zeno’s and then giving his understanding of it in the second, or the whole could be Socrates’ understanding. The difference, however, is not significant for our purposes.

on behalf of Parmenides' ontology.¹²³ Then Socrates offers his 'second-best method' as a way of avoiding Zeno's conclusion. This answer is given in three stages. First, Socrates describes the hypotheses of Forms, sensibles and participation in terms familiar to us from the middle dialogues (128e-130a). Second, Parmenides questions him in order to clarify the theory. Two clarifications are made: the Forms are separate (*choris*) and they are comprehensive (they explain even hair, dirt and mud) (103a-131a). Third, Parmenides gives a summary of Socrates' theory, to which Socrates gives his approval (130e-131a). Following this three-stage answer Parmenides launches his series of criticisms of the theory (131a-135c).

It is important that it is Socrates who sums up Zeno's book. Nowhere in the dialogue do we have direct quotations from the book (except the one possibility noted in the above footnote), even when Socrates is described as asking Zeno to re-read his first argument, what we have is only a report that this was done. What this establishes is that in the *Parmenides* we have Zeno's argument as understood by Socrates (an understanding to which Zeno assents). This reveals their common ground: Socrates accepts the historical Parmenides' criterion of being (that it be immediately and absolutely self-identical) and on this basis he accepts Zeno's claim that the sensible is contradictory. This explains why Socrates later speaks of Parmenides' own proofs of the conclusion that "the all is one" as "admirable" (128a-a), and why Parmenides returns the

123. This is important. It clarifies that Zeno is a Parmenidean monist, not a Sophistic skeptic. The two are similar in that the result of their arguments is the revelation of the contradictoriness of opinion but the latter is a problematic position because it remains dependent on the things of ordinary opinion as given in order to arrive at its skepticism. This reveals an element of dogmatism in it.

compliment at 130b, as noted earlier. It also makes sense of why Socrates sums up his response to Zeno by saying, in effect, that if the perplexities of the sensible are shown to be present in the Forms, he would not have an adequate response to him.¹²⁴ Socrates does not respond to Zeno's arguments by pointing to some fallacious reasoning in them. He does not show that the problem of the sensible (of there being a many, which Zeno presumes would be a sensible many) is an illusory problem. Rather, he accepts that the problem is a real problem, and thinks he has an answer to it. Zeno had taken the result of his arguments to leave us with only Parmenides' One as real being. Socrates presents the Forms as this real being, and through them he thinks he can save the sensible as being through participation in this real being.¹²⁵ Thus Socrates can say that there is nothing astonishing in the contradictoriness of sensible things, but that it would be astonishing if the Forms were shown to be contradictory (129a-b). That we need the theory of Forms in order to explain why there is nothing extraordinary in what Zeno says about the sensible shows that Socrates' remark is not an immediate nor a blanket dismissal of Zeno's view.

The main features of Socrates' account of the theory of Forms in the *Parmenides* are as

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124. Socrates says: “. . . my admiration would be much greater if anyone could show that these same perplexities are everywhere involved in the forms themselves - among the objects we apprehend in reflection, just as you and Parmenides have shown them to be involved in the things we see” (130a).
125. Melissus had said, following (the historical) Parmenides, that if there were a many, each would have to be like Parmenides' One. Socrates thinks the Forms are each like this. (On this see House, “The Criticism of Plato's Doctrine of Participation in Parmenides: A Propaedeutic to the Platonic Dialectic.”)

follows: a Form is ‘itself by itself’ (*auto kath’ hauto*, 128e and again 129d).¹²⁶ What we speak of as ‘many’ (ourselves and the things we sense) are determinate in so far as (and only in so far as) they participate in Forms.¹²⁷ These participants may participate in contrary Forms (they may be like and unlike for example) but each Form is simply itself (129a-d) and the Forms do not combine with each other (129e). The Forms are apprehended by reason, in contrast we see the ‘many’ (130a).

It is significant that the first articulation of the theory of Forms in the *Parmenides* is immediately recognizable as the theory of the middle dialogues. Both the language used and the concepts are the same. This shows that within the context of Socrates recognizing Zeno’s problem (the problem of the sensible consequent on Parmenides’ criterion of being) as a real problem, we are presented with the theory of the middle dialogues as an answer. This strongly suggests that Plato is making the point that, from the very start, the theory of Forms was informed by an adherence to Parmenides’ criterion of being.

After hearing Socrates’ account of the theory of Forms, Parmenides asks for clarification

126. Socrates asks “Do you not recognize that there exists, just by itself, a form of likeness and again another contrary form, unlikeness itself, and that of these two forms you and I and all the things we speak of as ‘many’ come to partake?” (128e). The translation is Cornford’s. See Plato, *Parmenides*, trans. F.M. Cornford, in *The Collected Dialogues of Plato*, eds. E. Hamilton and H. Cairns (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1961).

127. For example “... things which come to partake of likeness come to be alike in that respect and just in so far as they so come to partake of it . . .” (129a).

on two points and then summarizes the theory (130b-131a). The first point of clarification is the separation of Forms from things which participate in them. Parmenides asks:

Have you yourself drawn this distinction you speak of and separated apart on the one side forms themselves and on the other the things that share in them? Do you believe that there is such a thing as likeness itself apart from the likeness that we possess, and so on with unity and plurality and all the other terms in Zeno's arguments that you have just been listening to? (130b).

Socrates responds "Certainly I do." In his account Socrates presented the Forms as escaping Zeno's problems (as remaining self-identical). Here Parmenides is drawing out explicitly what is required for this to be possible. In order to remain self-identical the Forms need to be separate from the 'many' (the things which participate in them). We now have a clearer picture of the Forms as a multiplicity of self-identical beings.

I argued that in the *Phaedo* the forms were presented as causes, as self-identical, and as primary beings (where the last aspect was the least specified). In the middle dialogues the self-identity of the Forms is an immediate self-identity: each Form is simply what it is, and admits of no otherness or difference (the Forms themselves do not participate in each other).¹²⁸ The

128. It is argued that there are necessary relations between Forms, but the Forms themselves do not combine with each other. It is the participant which is three and is also necessarily odd (*Phaedo*, 103c-105c). Scolnicov cites passages from the middle dialogues where the relations between Forms are asserted (Scolnicov, 51-2). From these he draws a correct conclusion, but not the pertinent conclusion. He says that each Form must be one and many, depending on how we look on it. This remains subjective. It is not the Form itself which is both one and many, its oneness and manyness are dependent on our reflection. But what Plato is seeking is a divine logic. If P2 goes on to argue that the one must be

primacy of the Forms is that while they are causes, they are not themselves caused. They are in no sense dependent. What they are, they are in virtue of themselves. The phrase ‘itself by itself’ used frequently of the Forms seems most plausibly to refer, in the *Phaedo*, to both the self-identity of a Form and its independence or primary status. Now Parmenides is making the point that in order to be of this nature, the forms must be separate. It is not simply that we subjectively consider a Form as separate, a Form must objectively be (exist) separately from the many that participate in it. Parmenides is making explicit what a Form’s being ‘itself by itself’ must entail. This is consistent with the middle dialogues but is not explicitly stated there, though it should be noted that in the *Phaedo*, in defense of the claim that the soul is immortal while the body perishes, Socrates argues that the soul is akin to the Forms and that it is separate (*choris*) from the body.¹²⁹

In Parmenides’ second clarification he asks Socrates what things have a Form (130b-e). Socrates is confident that there is a Form, itself by itself, of rightness, beauty and goodness. He is less certain about man, fire and water. Of “trivial and undignified objects” such as “hair or mud or dirt” Socrates first responds that they do not have a Form but are “just the things we see.”

many (as Scolnicov argues, and in some sense I agree) - then it must be so objectively, out of itself, both one and many, not just one in one respect as seen by us and many in another respect as seen by us.

129. For example: after death “the soul is by itself apart from the body (... *aute kath’ hauten he psuche estai choris tou somatos* ...) (66e-67a, Greek from the Loeb edition, 230). Sayer makes this point and lists passages using *choris* with respect to the soul-body distinction in the *Phaedo* and one in the *Republic* (Sayer, 73-4).

But he then admits that he has “sometimes been troubled by a doubt whether what is true in one case may not be true in all.” Socrates has not pursued this possibility for fear of “tumbling into a bottomless pit of nonsense.” Instead, he has confined his reflection to Forms such as beauty, rightness and goodness. Parmenides responds by saying that when Socrates is mature he will not despise such base objects, and only does so now because he is young and pays attention to the opinions of the world. Parmenides’ point is that for the Forms to be an explanation at all, they must be a comprehensive explanation. If they are not, then there would be something which stands independent of them, and Socrates’ goal of a unified teleological account, programmatically set out in the *Phaedo*, would be compromised. Put in a different form: Socrates would need to add another hypothesis to the ‘second-best method.’ As well as laying down the Forms as the primary hypothesis he would have to lay down a coeval principle (or principles) along side them (to explain what the Forms do not), and then postulate the sensible as a mixture of these. Such a failure is what Socrates criticized Anaxagoras for. Instead of showing how *nous* was the cause of all, Anaxagoras was criticized for reverting to extraneous causes. Hence Socrates does not object to Parmenides’ assessment of the intention of the theory of Forms.

After these two clarifications Parmenides sums up the theory as follows: “you [Socrates] say there exist [*einai*] certain forms, of which these other things [*ta alla*] come to partake and so to be called after their names; by coming to partake of likeness or largeness or beauty or justice,

they become [*gignesthai*] like or large or beautiful or just?”¹³⁰ Through participation, the participants both are and are known. The claim is both metaphysical and epistemological. In conjunction with Parmenides’ second clarification, the theory as summarized (and affirmed by Socrates) claims that every determination of a thing is explained by its participation in a Form, not just its beauty and the other determinations on which the middle dialogues focus. This means that the thing’s existence is dependent on the Forms, for if one were to remove all of its determinations there would be no ‘thing’ left. In attempting to think a thing independently of the Forms, the most we could think is that it is pure indeterminacy.

The explanation of the theory of Forms by Socrates and the preliminary questioning of Parmenides are necessary in order to make more explicit 1) what I argued earlier - that the theory has from the start been informed by a Parmenidean criterion of being, 2) that its intent is

130. The Greek is: *dokei soi, hos phes, einai eide atta, hon tade ta alla metalambanonta tas eponumias auton ischein, oion homoiotetos men metalabonta homoia, megethous de megala, kallous de kai dikaiousunes dikaia te kai kala gignesthai;*” (130e-131a, Loeb edition). I have used Cornford’s translation. Gill and Ryan are, I think, slightly (and I emphasize only slightly) misleading in their translation. They render the Greek so as to emphasize the dependence of the use of language on the Forms. They give: “... there are certain forms from which these other things, by getting a share of them, derive their names - as, for instance, they come to be like by getting a share of likeness, large by getting a share of largeness, and just and beautiful by getting a share of justice and beauty.” See Plato, *Parmenides*, trans. M.L. Gill and P. Ryan, in *Plato: Complete Works*, ed. J.M. Cooper with D.S. Hutchinson (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co., 1997). Sayer gives the most literal translation: “You believe, so you say, that there are certain Forms in which those other things come to share and thereby to be invested with their names - as things that come to share in Likeness, for instance, become alike, [those in] Largeness become large, and [those in] Beauty and Justice become beautiful and just?” (Sayer, 8.)

to provide a comprehensive explanation of all things and 3) that its logic requires the separation of each Form from what participates in it. The dialogue is now in a position to examine the hypotheses of the theory. Parmenides pursues this examination through four criticisms. I will discuss the first, and then speak generally of the remaining three in discussing the implications of the first criticism. The first criticism (as also the following three) focuses on the separation of the Forms from participants. The criticism reveals that what is involved in this separation is a separation of unity and difference, and that when these have been separated, an objective relation between the two becomes unintelligible.

It would be appropriate to call the criticisms *aporiai* in Aristotle's sense of the term because they are not leveled at the theory from an opposed position but are rather impasses experienced when we attempt to articulate the 'second-best method' in scientific terms. That is, they lie within the Platonic project. In the first criticism or *aporia* Parmenides asks Socrates whether each thing which participates in the Forms participates in the whole Form or a part of it. Cornford (and others) have taken this to be a mistaken question - that is, that it is based on a misconstrual of the theory in which Forms are taken as material things and so as the material elements of things.¹³¹ I have already noted that the dialogue suggests otherwise: at the beginning of the *aporia* Socrates accepts without hesitation the alternatives of participating in the whole or part of the Form and at the end of the *aporia* Socrates is unable to see how to answer (he does

131. F.M. Cornford, *Plato and Parmenides*, translation with introduction and running commentary (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1939), 86-7.

not reply with an alternative and correct interpretation of the theory of Forms) (131e). The suggestion is that for Plato, in some sense, this must be a natural or obvious beginning to an investigation of the logic of participation.¹³²

Parmenides first considers if the Form “as a whole, a single thing, is in each of the many” (131a). There is a problem with this alternative. The Form, in itself, is separate and is one and the same thing. It is immediately self-identical. But now, considered as causing the many (as being participated in by the many) it is, as a whole, in many things which are different from it. It will then be “separate from itself” (131b). This means it will have lost its self-identity. This of course is unacceptable to Socrates - a Form is precisely that which is self-identical. Socrates answers this dilemma with an image: what if the Form “were like one and the same day, which is in many places at the same time and nevertheless is not separate from itself” (131b)? This is reminiscent of the light image in the *Republic*: there the Good is likened to the sun whose light remains one with itself while being the cause of our seeing and what is seen (508a-509c). In each of these images something which is one has a relation to the many which are not its parts. The images are intended to avoid the whole/part logic. (Parmenides will question whether this can be avoided so easily.) Doull interprets the day image as in fact nothing but the light image of

132. By the ‘logic of participation’ I mean participation when it is understood rationally rather than assumed and grasped in the form of an image. If the first criticism of Parmenides is proper to Plato’s theory of Forms, then it should not be interpreted in a way that sees it as a superficial and/or misguided attack on the theory. This produces something of an interpretative puzzle because *prima facie* it does seem superficial and misguided.

the *Republic*.¹³³ I would agree that these images are intrinsically connected, but the light image is so important that it seems Plato must have some purpose in using the day image instead of the light image. I think what he is doing is transforming that image under the pressure of Parmenides' criticism.¹³⁴ House writes of these two images: "One can think of the light image as having division and difference in its identity because its identity is the cause of such [division and difference]. But one can only think of 'the day image' as having division and difference in its identity in the purely external manner that an observer can note the co-presence of the same day and many places."¹³⁵ The side of unity is imaged by the temporal, that of difference by the spatial. The image stresses (or acknowledges) that these sides have fallen apart because they are only held together in the observer; they are not comprehended as having a necessary relation. This means that in the day image we have lost the causality of the Form. The logic which relates Form and participant is not an internal logic but an external one. That is, the relation between Form and participant is a relation which we (not the Form) establish. Socrates, at present, cannot see how the Form, out of itself, can remain self-identical and yet explain completely the many. (The 'second-best method' states that this is so, but does not articulate the logic of it.) To give the light image would be to beg the question (i.e. it would simply state the claim of the 'second-

133. Cf. "The Problem of Participation in Plato's Parmenides" and "Plato's Parmenides."

134. The pressure being applied is that Socrates transform the image of light into purely logical form (to move from an imaginative grasp to a purely philosophical grasp of the 'second-best method'). I will explain why, despite this, Socrates still speaks in images here.

135. House, "The Criticism of Plato's Doctrine of Participation in Parmenides: A Propaedeutic to the Platonic Dialectic," 157.

best method').¹³⁶ What Socrates *is* capable of seeing is how from an external perspective an observer can relate things to Forms.¹³⁷

What we are doing in this section of the dialogue is trying to articulate the logic of the 'second-best method.' The light image of the *Republic* is an image of the self-identical Good as productive of what is other than it. The goal of the 'second-best method' is to know this (to comprehend the content which is imaged). The images of the day and the sail (to which I will turn shortly) are more limited expressions of the logic of the 'second-best method.'¹³⁸ They make up the first step in the attempt to articulate scientifically the logic of the 'second-best method.' This first step can be a source of confusion (as I think it is for Cornford) because they are still images. As I will note later, Doull interprets the *aporiai* as developing in a parallel manner to the sections of the line of the *Republic*, and I think this is a promising approach. In this first *aporia* we are treating the logic of participation in the most external way, in the form of

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- 136. The light image is appropriate to the *Republic* (it does not beg the question in a problematic way there) because it is an image of the end towards which Socrates is headed. It is conceived of as an end which must be present from the beginning in order for there to be a journey towards it.
 - 137. Socrates cannot articulate the logic of how a self-identical Form causes the many (and light is the image of this) but he can articulate how an external observer could relate the many to their Form (and the day is the image of this).
 - 138. A distinction which Hegel uses regularly in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* is, I think, pertinent and helpful in understanding what I claim is going on in the move from the light image of the *Republic* to the day image of the *Parmenides*. Hegel distinguishes between what is 'meant' and what is 'said.' For example, in the section on sense-certainty Hegel argues that sense-certainty means to grasp the particular but what it says when it attempts to articulate its knowledge is universal. Here what is 'meant' is the light image but all we are capable of 'saying' is the day image.

images.

I think the reason given above for Socrates' use of the day image rather than the light image explains what is a rather striking aspect of the dialogue: Socrates' willingness to give up this train of thought so readily when Parmenides challenges it. Parmenides says: "I like the way you make out that one and the same thing is in many places at once, Socrates. You might as well spread a sail over a number of people and then say that the one sail as a whole was over them all" (131b). Sayer argues that the day image is promising and that Socrates should not give it up so quickly.¹³⁹ Why does Sayer think it is so promising when Plato clearly does not? The answer is that it *is* promising if what we are looking for is a way in which *we* can relate things and their Form, if we are content with an external logic which relates them.¹⁴⁰ Socrates begins with the assumption of the many, and then he points to their identity in the Form, just as we can understand many things in different places as being in the same moment. As long as we have the assumption of a many, this is unproblematic: the Form and the many are each given and we then relate them.¹⁴¹ But if the Form is to be the cause of the many, this assumption cannot remain as

139. Sayer, 75-8.

140. Sayer does not as a rule ignore the intended causality of the Forms, but in his discussion of the first *aporia* he neglects this aspect, or at least its implications. This neglect is more thorough in the case of Scolnicov's commentary on the *Parmenides*. He can see the dialogue as a discussion of the abstract relation of a one and a many because he does not attend to the causality of the Forms or, which is the same thing, that Plato's 'one' is his Good. (See especially Scolnicov, 51-2.) Scolnicov remains with what I have termed an external logic.

141. Both Doull and Findlay speak of the middle dialogues as '*eidetic* reflections' rather than science proper. I think they are right in this because these dialogues do just what I am

an assumption in an adequate account. The Form must allow of a comprehensive explanation. But in the day image all that is known in the Form is the identity or unity of the many, their difference from each other and from the Form is lost. We have not then saved the many with the 'second-best method.' We have not explained them or allowed for their being many (they are only many by our assuming them as given at the start).¹⁴² This does not produce an *aporia* if we give up the causality of the Forms, for then, as above, we have before us Forms and things as separate and we relate them (in this case all that is called for is a logic which is external to the Forms), but it does present an *aporia* if we demand that the Forms be causes, as Plato consistently has since their introduction in the middle dialogues. For Plato, as strange as it may seem to say, the Forms must be separate but the many cannot be. Separation cannot be a symmetrical relation, for the same reason that participation cannot be a symmetrical relation. The many have no independence at all from the Forms.

The 'second-best method' in general is promising for the same reason that the day image is. Given its hypotheses, an external observer can relate Forms and participants. But what is not shown (which is why the method is second-best) is how the Good, out of itself, produces the Forms, and how the Forms, out of themselves, produce their participants. The articulation of this

describing above: they begin with ordinary opinions and language and bring out a need for the Forms (*Eide*); they do not give a systematic account beginning and ending with the Forms. Cf. J. Doull, "Findlay and Platonism," in *Studies in the Philosophy of J.N. Findlay*, eds. Robert S. Cohen, Richard M. Martin, and Merold Westphal (Albany: SUNY Press, 1985), 250-262 and J.N. Findlay, *Plato: The Written and Unwritten Doctrines*.

142. This means that we have not been able to show Zeno that we can think the many/sensible.

would be a divine logic, internal to the Good itself. This would be a logic of the Good which is the being of the Good. In this sense for Plato, as for Hegel, (true) logic is metaphysics. The knowledge of this logic would be the unhypothetical knowledge of all things through the Good that lies at the top of the line in the *Republic* (Book VI, 510b-511e).

Socrates gives up his day image because he is honest: he recognizes that he is viewing the relation of participants to Forms from the bottom of the line, not the top. He has not made intelligible the causality of the Forms. He has given an external account, not an account internal to the activity of the Good itself. Because it is an external account he does not have grounds to object to Parmenides replacing the day image with the sail image.¹⁴³

Socrates' image expresses the Form, not simply as the unity, but as the undivided unity of the many (the one day or moment which is not divided). Parmenides' image expresses the dividedness of the many and, as we shall see, this is an endless dividedness.¹⁴⁴ It is not that Socrates denies what Parmenides emphasizes nor vice-versa, what we have is a difference of

143. If Socrates' image captured the causality of the good/Forms and Parmenides' image did not, he would have reason to reject the latter as less adequate to the 'second-best method.' As it stands the two images are equally justified. (This explains, I think, Socrates' acceptance, but hesitating acceptance, of Parmenides' image at 131C.) This brings out how, from our subjective view, it is simply a choice whether to see unity or difference in the relation of participation.

144. On this see Doull, "The Problem of Participation in Plato's Parmenides" and "Plato's Parmenides," and House, "The Criticism of Plato's Doctrine of Participation in Parmenides: A Propaedeutic to the Platonic Dialectic."

emphasis in the grasp of the same thing - how something participates in its Form. In isolating one aspect, both Socrates and Parmenides grasp, not the participant, but an abstraction from it.¹⁴⁵ In the sail image the dividedness of the many is maintained, but at the expense of the unity or self-identity of the Form and so also of the participant. The immediate unity of the Form is lost because it is now taken as divided. Socrates says of this that he cannot accept that a Form which can actually be divided can ever be truly one (131c). Each participant is taken as participating in a part of its Form, as the individual stands under a part of one sail. Each participant is different from every other participant in virtue of this, since the parts of the Form/sail are different from each other. But this means also that the participant is different from its Form (the part is not the whole). The Form, however, *is* the identity/unity of the participant (*ex hypothesi* - in the ‘second-best method’ the participant is what it is only in so far as it participates in the Form). Hence the participant, in Parmenides’ image, is different from itself. We have lost the unity and self-identity of the Form *and* of the participant. We are left with only endless difference.

Parmenides ends his criticism with what on the surface seems like misplaced comments about difficulties with the causation of the Forms given the sail image. Here Cornford has the best support for his view that the Forms are being viewed as the material elements of what we speak of as the participant. Parmenides mentions two kinds of problems. First: “Suppose it is largeness itself that you are going to divide into parts, and that each of the many large things is to

145. Note that to grasp what it is to participate in a Form and to grasp what the participant is amount to the same thing because the participant is nothing except through its participation in the Forms.

be large by virtue of a part of largeness which is smaller than largeness itself. Will not that seem unreasonable” (131c-d). Second: “. . . take smallness. Is one of us to have a portion of smallness, and is smallness to be larger than that portion, which is a part of it? On this supposition again smallness itself will be larger . . .” (131d-e). If we keep in mind that the sail image is an image, then we can view this discussion as, at the level of image, arguing for the difference of the participant from its Form in the first problem - where a part of the Form (and so something necessarily small) is to be the cause of a thing’s largeness, and arguing for the difference of the Form from itself in the second problem where the Form smallness turns out to be large (because it is larger than its parts).

Socrates’ image of the day, if taken, not as an abstraction, but as the complete expression of what participating in a Form is, would leave us with the ontology of the historical Parmenides;¹⁴⁶ Parmenides’ image, if taken likewise, would leave us with the ontology of Heraclitus (if that be understood to deny absolutely any self-identical thing).¹⁴⁷ But, as I have

146. If we consider only sensibles/participants and Forms this is not obvious but all the problems in this relation are repeated in the relation of Forms to the Good: the Good is not intended to be merely the abstract unity of the Forms (arrived at only by our subjective reflection on the Forms). If I am correct about the significance of the prologue and what I have termed the Clazomenaeon perspective, then Plato is fully aware of this problem.

147. It is not strange that this would be a form of criticism offered by Parmenides, because it is presumed to be a problematic result. My point here is similar to one House makes (“The Criticism of Plato’s Doctrine of Participation in Parmenides: A Propaedeutic to the Platonic Dialectic,” 158). Unlike the Socrates of the middle dialogues, Heraclitus does not constrain himself according to the criterion of being which was laid down by the historical Parmenides.

said, neither Socrates nor Parmenides simply rejects the point of the other. What they do is to bring out different aspects of participation. The effect of this is to reveal what each emphasizes as an abstraction (undivided unity, endless division/complete indeterminacy). In each case we do not grasp that which is, only an abstraction which we think. For the unity which Socrates emphasizes and the difference which Parmenides emphasizes to be actual they must be in the participant. That is, there must be a concrete unity of them. A scientific formulation of the ‘second-best method’ would have to reveal how there is such a unity of unity and difference (it must enable us to think this unity of unity and difference, not just assume it). In such a unity, unity would no longer be an undivided unity and difference would no longer be an endless difference.

This is, of course, only a consequence of the first *aporia* if one is determined to see the ‘second-best method’ through (and if the theory of Forms presented in the *Parmenides* is the same as the theory of the middle dialogues and if the first *aporia* must be interpreted in a way which makes it a criticism proper of that theory, as I have argued). It is not a consequence which Plato explicitly discusses. There are no such explicit and positive conclusions drawn anywhere in the dialogue except possibly in its final words (though the difficulty in determining precisely what Plato intends by them mitigates the extent to which they are a positive statement).¹⁴⁸ This is

148. The dialogue closes with the following statement: “It seems that, whether there is or is not a one, both that one and the others alike are and are not, and appear and do not appear to be, all manner of things in all manner of ways, with respect to themselves and to one another” (166b).

part of the difficulty in interpreting the dialogue's argument - if there is a positive argument, or even a unified critique, then this lies implicit in the work. This may be because Plato himself was not fully aware of the consequences of the discussion (as House judges) or it may be that he has some pedagogical purpose (as Doull seems to judge). Even if the former is true, this does not mean that there is not a unified argument nor does it mean that there is not a positive conclusion, even if only in the form of laying out a program of what needs to be accomplished, rather than in the form of the presentation of a new or transformed doctrine. Ultimately one must judge a unified and positive interpretation of the dialogue by whether it does justice to every aspect of the dialogue - both its indirectly philosophical content (its characterization, setting, images) and its immediately recognizable philosophical arguments.

To better understand the consequence of the first *aporia* I will in what follows give a brief sketch of the direction of the argument in the remainder of the dialogue. I will draw on the interpretation of Doull, House and Hegel.¹⁴⁹ The former two in particular argue for a logical connexion not only between each *aporia* but also between P1 and P2. Both Doull's and Plato's arguments are very difficult to follow.¹⁵⁰ My intention here is to give an overview of what I take

149. G.W.F. Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, Vol. II, trans. E.S. Haldane and F.H. Simpson (New York: The Humanities Press, 1974), 49-71, especially 56-62; Doull, "The Problem of Participation in Plato's Parmenides" and "Plato's Parmenides;" House, "The Criticism of Plato's Doctrine of Participation in Parmenides: A Propaedeutic to the Platonic Dialectic." The work of these interpreters of Plato is consistent and so I speak of it as forming one interpretation, rather than speaking of their 'interpretations' in the plural.

150. One reason for the difficulty of the accounts in Doull and Plato is, I think, that each is determined to overcome grasping philosophical content in the form of an image or on the

the general form of these to be as it relates to what I have argued is the consequence of the first *aporia*.

Doull argues that the *aporiai* are connected in a logical sequence. House summarizes this as follows: “The correction which is made from one *aporia* to the next involves Socrates['] redefinition of ‘the many’ and Parmenides’ response, which turns on a new difficulty concerning the separation of ‘the many’ from their identity.”¹⁵¹ On Doull’s interpretation we have in these *aporiai* the demand for an ever more concrete unity of these two sides (Socrates’ emphasis on identity and Parmenides’ emphasis on difference), which come to be seen as the elements of the many, and of the Forms. This parallels the move from the bottom of the line (*eikasia*) to its penultimate section (*dianoia*) in the *Republic* (Book VI, 509d-511e). In P1 “the elements [unity and difference] are first abstractly related and the series of problems considers the stages by which again they become concrete and adequate to each other” but this logical structure is obscured because “in each case the objection made to the positive relation of ‘the many’ to the ‘Eide’ [Forms] is to show them as endlessly other than themselves and the ‘Eide.’”¹⁵²

In the final *aporia* Parmenides concludes that there are two distinct worlds: a world of

basis of an hypothesis which remains merely given. This might seem to be blatantly false with respect to Plato. His work has many beautiful and strangely compelling images. But I suggest that he only uses these when he has found no other option.

151. House, “The Criticism of Plato’s Doctrine of Participation in Parmenides: A Propaedeutic to the Platonic Dialectic,” 161.

152. Doull, “The Problem of Participation in Plato’s Parmenides,” 17.

divine objects (Forms) and a divine knowledge of them, and a world of human objects and a human knowledge of them (133b-134e). From within this *aporia* the line of the *Republic* appears to be broken. No movement to its final section (*noesis*) appears possible. Yet at the same time the continuity of the line is affirmed - the lower sections are asserted to be completely dependent on the highest (thought and discourse are not simply limited if *noesis* is beyond reach, they are lost completely).¹⁵³ P2 then is a new attempt to grasp what *noesis* would be. It is new because it gives up the separation and the simplicity of the Forms. In it the examination of identity and difference as the elements of the Forms becomes the focus. P2 is an extremely puzzling section of the dialogue because it is attempting to answer the problem developed in P1 (how a divine knowledge or 'best method' is possible, i.e. the knowledge of how, out of itself, the Good is productive of what is other than itself) but P2 remains in the form of an extended *aporia*. It treats hypotheses as hypotheses (just as the *Republic* promises that *noesis* will)¹⁵⁴ but its result appears thoroughly negative. Doull, however, argues that it has a positive content: what

153. "But on the other hand, Parmenides continued, if, in view of all these difficulties and others like them, a man refuses to admit that forms of things exist or to distinguish a definite form in every case, he will have nothing on which to fix his thought, so long as he will not allow that each thing has a character which is always the same, and in so doing he will completely destroy the significance of all discourse" (135b-c).

154. As quoted earlier: "Then also understand that, by the other subsection of the intelligible [the highest section of the line], I mean that which reason itself grasps by the power of dialectic. It does not consider these hypotheses as first principles but truly as hypotheses - stepping stones to take off from, enabling it to reach the unhypothetical first principle of everything. Having grasped this principle, it reverses itself and, keeping hold of what follows from it, comes down to a conclusion without making use of anything visible at all, but only of forms themselves, moving from forms to forms, and ending in forms" (*Republic*, 511b).

P2 supplies which is lacking in P1 is that it treats of the relation of the above affirmation and negation of a thing's participation in its Form (the opposed emphases of Socrates and Parmenides) and, ultimately, in the Good. In so doing it attempts to articulate what I have termed a 'divine logic.' Doull expresses this as follows:

Out of the criticism of Socrates emerges a new dialectic which for the first time attends seriously to the logic of the production of a *kosmos* or finite order from one or more *archai*. The new dialectic attempts to express in a perfectly universal form or logically that the principle cannot be an abstraction beyond its product but must also be comprehensive of it; secondly what the division of product from its cause is logically; and thirdly the relation and dependence of the caused or, as Plato calls it, 'the others' is to the Principle. The result of the dialectic would thus be to have shown the Good as principle.¹⁵⁵

If Doull is correct that the criticisms of the theory of Forms present a unified critique which deepens the result of the first criticism as I have expounded it, then the outcome of Plato's self-criticism in the *Parmenides* is not to abandon the theory of Forms but it *is* to initiate a radical transformation of this theory in the service of the project which motivated it in the first place. That project can now be seen to demand (and to have always demanded) the articulation of a divine logic. I think Doull has characterized well *what* this logic needs to accomplish in order to live up to Plato's demand for a final and comprehensive knowing. This is our primary concern in articulating what Plato's project is. There is of course a natural question which follows and that is *how* this is to be accomplished. The answer to this remains obscure in the *Parmenides*, in part because of the obscurity of the second part of the dialogue. A major

155. Doull, "The Problem of Participation in Plato's *Parmenides*," 13.

difficulty is that to ask for an abstract account or demonstration of its possibility may be to misunderstand it. That is, as abstract it would be inadequate to what it is meant to be an account of.¹⁵⁶ I suggest that this is one important reason why Plato found it necessary to resort to images in the middle dialogues.¹⁵⁷ However, without understanding all that would be entailed in fulfilling the idea of a divine logic, I think we *can* understand the rationale for its demand if we take seriously Plato's efforts to see the logic of participation through, that is, to develop a properly scientific formulation of it, in an attempt to fulfill the project which is first explicitly announced in the *Phaedo*.

156. To put this problem in Hegelian terms, an abstract account cannot do justice to what demands to be fully concrete and known as fully concrete. Giving such an account would be like giving a non-rational ground for something which is claimed to be thoroughly rational.

157. The same difficulty arises in Hegel's work, but with a different result because Hegel works hard to free philosophy from any dependence on images. The result is that it is difficult - if not in principle impossible - for him to introduce his system adequately in any other way than working through the system itself. This explains his consistent complaint that the desire to be given an introduction or preface is a desire for the impossible.

Chapter Two

Hegel and Plato: Philosophy as *Theoria*, the Science of the Absolute

Part II

II. Hegel's Transformation of the Platonic Project

II.1. Overview of the Platonic Project with Attention to Hegel's Interpretation of it.

I have argued that we can discern a project in Plato's middle dialogues which is attempting to work out the nature of philosophy (or the knowledge proper to philosophy) and the ground of its possibility.¹⁵⁸ That project begins to be formulated in the *Meno*, is developed in the *Phaedo*, and the *Republic* (among other dialogues), and is taken stock of in the *Parmenides*.¹⁵⁹ Throughout we find a demand that philosophical knowledge be absolute in the sense of final.¹⁶⁰

158. Plato characteristically addresses both types of questions simultaneously: epistemological questions and metaphysical questions are seen as necessarily related, contrary to what might, *prime facie*, seem the clearer approach of sorting out epistemological questions first and then addressing metaphysical ones. In this section, I speak of 'Plato's view' as a convenience. I mean by this the interpretation I have given of what the dialogues establish. Of course, the dialogue form does not present a view directly - whether that view is a project, or a doctrine, or even a set of questions (it might, for instance, be ridiculing those who question, as in the dialogue of Aristophanes' play *The Clouds*).

159. As noted in chapter 1, I accept J. N. Findlay's general ordering of the Platonic dialogues on the basis of their philosophical content. I concentrate on the *Meno* and the *Parmenides*, which I take to frame this period.

160. I have argued in ch. 1 that Plato presents us with the idea of knowledge proper, what is sought in philosophy, which must be distinguished from what we in ordinary practical life might call 'knowledge.' At the end of the *Meno* (86c-100b), what we might call 'knowledge' in an ordinary sense is closer to what Plato discusses as true belief/opinion (99a). Plato does not use one term consistently for 'knowledge' (as well as for 'knowing'). *Episteme* is one term he uses, and I will use this to refer to what I take to be knowledge proper for him.

That is, there cannot be any sense of it as consisting of a theory which stands in need of justification. Philosophic knowledge is not a species of belief. Connected to this is the assumption that such knowledge is in principle, or potentially, comprehensive. The metaphysical view of the soul which goes hand-in-hand with this epistemological view is of the soul, not as a thing, but as an activity. It is, or is primarily, the activity of recollecting the truth.¹⁶¹ This is an activity which is rational and free.¹⁶² We can understand how a movement from belief to knowledge is possible in this context. That movement is not what one might expect from a common sense perspective, namely, that we begin with opinions/beliefs (I use these interchangeably) and sort out their truth or falsity according to evidence, coming to a reasoned position of justified belief (which, if true, would count as knowledge). Rather, in Plato's view, we do begin with opinions, but through the recognition of their deficiency, we are turned inward to a truth recollected. The starting point - opinion - is the occasion of the inward turn, but it is not a stepping stone in the sense of a premise of an argument nor is it an epistemological unit which remains present in knowing.¹⁶³ How could this journey towards the truth be possible?

161. I have concentrated on the theoretical dimension of Plato's work. It must be noted that the theoretical and practical (in the sense of ethical) are not disconnected in Plato. It is in the *Meno* that the soul is, I argue, conceived of as an activity. I have not compared this to a similar but different conception of the soul in the *Phaedo*.

162. The soul, when recollecting the truth, is free because it is not dependent on anything external, there is no passivity, it is purely active and engaged in what is proper to itself. Hegel would say it is 'at home with itself.'

163. This Platonic view of how we come to know makes sense of Socrates' self-description of being a midwife to others (*Theaetetus* 150b-c), rather than being a teacher in the sense of passing knowledge on to someone else (an idea that Socrates makes fun of in the *Symposium*, 175d-e). His questioning serves to help in the recognition of the deficiency of opinion and the resultant inward turn to a truth recollected. This view also makes sense, on

The way in which Plato envisions its possibility is that the object of *episteme* is the Good, understood as the first principle, productive of all that is other than it - productive of both the being of what is known and the knowing of it.¹⁶⁴ Here Plato has taken on and transformed Anaxagoras' principle, *nous*, now understood as a comprehensive principle which is both rational and teleological. We can now say that (for Plato) knowledge is absolute in a second sense: it is knowledge *of* the absolute, and it is, in part, by being such that it can be absolute in the first sense, that is, characterized as final and comprehensive.¹⁶⁵ The doctrine of recollection presents *episteme* as proper to the soul, and presents the soul as desiring *episteme*. This is a teleological view in which the activity of the soul consists in the repossession of a content proper to it. In knowing the Good the soul is returning to its self.¹⁶⁶ However, direct knowledge of the Good has

a more general level, of Plato's choice of the dialogue form for engaging in philosophy: the intention is to quicken the mind's journey, a journey that the mind must make for itself.

164. The Good is introduced in *Republic* VI, 504d-511e. The character of Socrates says that "... not only do the objects of knowledge owe their being known to the good, but their being is also due to it, although the good is not being, but superior to it in rank [or dignity (*presbeia*)] and power" (509b). A central question at the heart of much of the history of Platonism is whether the Good completely transcends the distinction of knowing and being or whether this distinction is within the unity of the Good itself. We will see that Hegel takes the latter view.
165. The second sense does not completely explain the first sense: if our knowledge of the absolute were to be adequate, then it would be final and comprehensive, but one might think that knowledge properly speaking is *of* the absolute, yet is forever incomplete in us as finite knowers.
166. This is the interpretation of Platonism that Augustine must have in the *Confessions*: he sees a movement from the mutable world of sensation to the inner world of immutable reasons and thence upward to God. There is a kind of falling away of the soul from its proper content or homeland in its sensuous engagement with the world. In Hegel this will be transformed into a finding of itself - that is, the soul (now better understood in Hegel as 'self') must make and know itself, not return as out of a fallenness in its engagement with the world, but because this remains a teleological view it remains connected to Plato's view.

eluded Plato and so he presents us with a *deuteros plous*¹⁶⁷ or 'second-best method' (an indirect method) of knowing it. *Episteme* becomes the knowing of Forms, understood as divine, intelligible, self-identical, fully real, and causes of the sensible (whose reality is parasitic on that of the Forms).¹⁶⁸ This second-best method is presented in the *Phaedo* through the laying down of three hypotheses: the Forms, sensible participants, and the relation of participation.¹⁶⁹ The *Republic* draws together the metaphysical and epistemological sides of this Platonic view in its

167. Literally 'second sailing,' *Phaedo*, 99d.

168. I take James Doull's interpretation of the Forms as best understood as the necessary determinations of the Good to be the most plausible, but there is much room for interpretative debate here. On the character of Forms, cf. *Phaedo*, 75d-80b. For Doull's view, cf. "Plato's *Parmenides*," in *Philosophy and Freedom, The Legacy of James Doull*, D. Peddle and N. Robertson, eds. (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 2003), 83-139.

169. It should be noted that 'hypothesis' in Plato means a starting point for inquiry. This should not be confused with the modern scientific sense of 'hypothesis' as a theory standing in need of verification. They are related, since we turn to each out of a desire for explanation, but the distinction is important. (Julia Annas has commented on this, cf. *New Perspectives on Plato, Ancient and Modern* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002), 12 n38.) Reference to Descartes is helpful in understanding that distinction. In Descartes' *Meditations*, the existence of God is not an hypothesis in the modern scientific sense. For it to be so, we would need to *know* something else first, for which the hypothesis was offered as explanation. But for Descartes, our first knowledge is of God, and this knowledge mediates all other knowledge (our first *certainty* is the I's self-certainty, but our first *knowledge* is of God). Descartes' God is explanatory, indeed is at the center of all explanation, but not in the sense of a modern hypothesis. We can speak of Plato's Good as an hypothesis (laid down as a starting point), but it functions as an over-arching goal: the knowledge of it, if achieved, would be explanatory of all else. Within the context of knowledge of the Good as our goal, the Forms are laid down as a starting point in the second-best method. The philosophical activity of Plato's Socrates makes no sense unless we understand him to be standing in a relation to the Good from the beginning. His 'ignorance' is never simply an emptiness. Hegel's starting points are similar to Plato's in being starting points for inquiry, not premises, observations or evidence (understood as starting points for proof). Hegel says of any beginning that, as a beginning, it is a presupposition, but his point is that in the end it must cease to be this if we are to really know, and not simply have dogmatic opinion.

three central images. The image of the sun treats the Good as first principle.¹⁷⁰ The image of the line treats of the inward journey of the mind and its process of recollection in which the movement from opinion to knowledge involves the movement to what is both ontologically and epistemologically prior from what is posterior.¹⁷¹ At the top of the line we have *noesis*, the unhypothetical knowing of the Good through the Forms.¹⁷² The allegory of the cave unites these two images, presenting philosophy as the ascent out of the cave to a vision of the Good - that is, to a science of the Good which would know it as, out of itself, productive of all that is other than it.¹⁷³ In the *Parmenides* the discussion between Socrates and Parmenides serves to clarify that in the second-best method the Forms are intended to be truly comprehensive causes and that a separation (*chorismos*) of Form from participant has been necessary. The dialogue considers a series of criticisms of the second-best method, which can be interpreted as bringing out our inability to think the relation of participation scientifically (rather than simply assuming it).¹⁷⁴ In trying to think the logic of the second-best method through, Socrates brings out the side of simple unity, Parmenides brings out the side of endless difference. The suggestion is that we must be able to think these together if we are to grasp what is real, rather than grasping mere

170. *Republic*, VI, 506d-509b.

171. *Republic*, VI, 509d-511e.

172. Recall that the highest section of the line, *noesis*, is distinguished from the penultimate section, *dianoia*, in that, while each begins from hypotheses, *dianoia* reasons from hypotheses as given, whereas *noesis* treats these hypotheses *as* hypotheses and in so doing moves beyond them to an unhypothetical knowing (*Republic*, VI, 511b).

173. *Republic*, VII, 514 ff..

174. Another way to put this is to say that once the *chorismos* (the separation of Form and sensible) has been posited, we are unable to see how the Form can overcome this.

abstractions. We, from an external vantage point, can relate Form and participant to one another, but we cannot see how, out of itself, the Form is productive of the sensible. This means that we have not really thought the Form (since what it *is*, is the cause of the sensible) nor have we discovered the intelligibility of the sensible.¹⁷⁵ This predicament is summed up in the final criticism of the *Parmenides*, which results in the conclusion that there is an intelligible world known by the divine, and a sensible world known by us, but that, equally, such a division would make the latter (a mere human knowledge) impossible. This could be stated in terms of Plato's image of the line this way: there is found to be no movement from the lower line to the upper line, and yet if there is no movement there can be no lower line. The idea presented is that if *episteme* (the rise to a science of the Good) is not possible for us, we do not have the alternative of turning to a more mundane knowledge (and with it a less demanding conception of philosophy). It would appear that it is a case of all or nothing (to borrow a phrase from Paul Franks).¹⁷⁶

175. The context of the criticism of the second-best method in the *Parmenides* makes it clear that if we have not been able to discover the intelligibility of the sensible, then we have not understood how it could even *be* at all. (The examination of the logic of participation arises from Socrates' response to Zeno's challenge that we cannot think a finitude (a plurality of finite things) and hence that there could not *be* such a finitude.)

176. Paul Franks, *All or Nothing: Systematicity, Transcendental Arguments, and Skepticism in German Idealism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005). Caught in this *aporia*, we find ourselves in a situation similar to that which one twentieth century interpreter of Hegel, Emil Fackenheim, believes Hegel leaves us in. Fackenheim sees Hegel as the culmination of the western philosophical tradition, and Fackenheim thinks that we cannot set aside Hegel's aspiration to an absolute knowing, yet our experience is that we have failed. See the concluding chapter, "The Crisis of the Hegelian Middle," in Emil Fackenheim, *The Religious Dimension of Hegel's Thought* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967), 232-244.

I will be arguing that Hegel takes this Platonic view of knowledge and its proper object, along with the problems it presents, very seriously, and that we miss something important in Hegel if we down-play this aspect of his thought. My contention is not that Hegel is a Platonist, any more than he is an Aristotelian, a Proclean, an Augustinian, a Cartesian, a Spinozist or a Kantian.¹⁷⁷ Hegel would be none and yet all of these. That is, Hegel looks on the history of philosophy as a unified development of thinking itself, and he takes his own system to be the expression of what that development has produced.¹⁷⁸ What I do wish to contend, however, is that Hegel understands that development to have taken up and furthered Plato's project as I have expressed it, rather than rejected Plato. This is important, because many Hegel scholars (and also philosophers who turn to Hegel for inspiration) often interpret, or assume, Hegel to be anti-Platonic (and it is crucially important to them that he *be* anti-platonic).¹⁷⁹ I suggest that this more

177. This list is not arbitrary, but I cannot develop the reasons for choosing these particular figures here.

178. Hegel *does* think that there are special moments (more concrete, less abstract) in this history, where its previously one-sided moments are drawn together. He thinks of Plato as the first of these concretizations. (The Pre-Socratics, the Hellenistic schools and the rationalists and empiricists of early modern philosophy are understood by Hegel, on the other hand, to be necessary, but particularly one-sided, moments.) Cf., for example, LHP, II, 13-14.

179. This is generally true of the Hegelian left. We find it in Marx and Kojève. It is also true of more recent non-metaphysical readings of Hegel (Hartmann, Pinkard, Reading and others). Rorty and Brandom are examples of philosophers whose interest is in finding inspiration in, and making use of, aspects of Hegel for their own work (without the intention of developing a thorough reading of Hegel for its own sake) and for whom an anti-platonism is an important component of what they see as right in Hegel. For Brandom there is a fundamental divide in philosophy between either beginning with Platonism or with a non-Platonist approach (which for him leads to pragmatism). On Rorty and Hegel, see Nathan

often than not takes the form of an initial assumption which then colors the interpretation. Treating Hegel as anti-Platonic is conducive to downplaying the teleological element in his thought (which means for Hegel downplaying the teleological structure of the actual) and is conducive to stressing one side of two important oppositions: historical contingency over eternal truth, and finite human thinking over an infinite, divine thinking. Furthermore, if we stress the side of finitude in human thinking we will naturally be inclined to set aside from the start Hegel's idea of (and claim to) a speculative thinking, and so to set aside the very form that he claims a truly philosophical argument (or even thought) must take.¹⁸⁰ Without being self-consciously anti-Platonic, a reading of Hegel which stresses his thought as primarily developing out of and responding to Kant will not necessarily stress one side over the other of these oppositions, but will have a natural tendency to think Hegel must begin on the side of the finite (where Kant has firmly established us) and move (mysteriously or problematically) to the side of the infinite.¹⁸¹ To be a Platonist might mean stressing the contrary pole in the above oppositions, but to be a

Rotenstreich, "Rorty's Interpretation of Hegel," *The Review of Metaphysics* 39, no. 2 (Dec. 1985): 321-333.

180. I will later return to the idea that, for Hegel, philosophical argument and philosophical thought are the same thing.

181. One might think that this is obviously what happens in the course of the PhG. That can be seen as Hegel's articulation of the rise out of the Platonic cave (a rise which takes place through thought's history). This I think would be right, but it is no less, for Hegel, the recollection of an infinite thinking which comes to itself in that rise. That infinite thinking does not appear at the end as a product, but has been ever-present as the end of the activity, in the sense of moving principle. I would not deny the importance Kant has for Hegel, only the assumption that Hegel can be understood adequately from within the perspective of post-Kantian developments. (I will discuss this later in relation to Paul Franks' treatment of German Idealism as a specifically post-Kantian development.)

Hegelian is to look to their unity. Understanding (or even approaching an understanding of) why Hegel does this and what it would mean to do it requires attending to the synthesis of much more than his immediate predecessors in his thought. I hope to take some small steps in that direction. The result, if successful, will be to have developed a schematic view of an important element of Hegel's project. This, I think, is an important, if limited, task, because just what Hegel is trying to accomplish is so much in contention amongst scholars (and philosophers more generally who would make use of Hegel) and our view of what Hegel is trying to accomplish will color the more particular interpretation of any specific text.

II.2. Hegel's Transformation of the Platonic Project, an Interpretive View

In the following section I will be giving an interpretive view which stresses the Platonic strain in Hegel. My intention is to bring out a generally neglected side of Hegel's thought, a focus on which will enable us to better understand the ever-present aspect of the divine in his argument (as more than metaphorical or rhetorical flourish) and with this, his conception of philosophy as 'speculative' (in form and content).¹⁸² My primary interest in this chapter, more

182. This overview of Hegel's conception of philosophy as arising out of the Platonic conception and transforming that original Platonic conception, with a resultant stress on the theological dimension, will consist of bold interpretive claims, each of which is contentious. This is inevitable because my aim is to articulate what I see as Hegel's goal (or, to put it differently, where Hegel thinks he has helped us to arrive through our own immanent self-critique as we engage with the content of the *Phenomenology* and the *Encyclopedia*) and the resulting view of how we might get to that goal. Hegel's own contention is that outside of the process referred to above, his conception of philosophy and its place in our life more

generally, will be to develop a schematic sense of Hegel's conception of philosophy. This not simply a personal interest, my claim is that Hegel himself forces this approach on us: if he is correct about the nature of philosophy (and in developing a charitable reading of the texts, I assume we remain open to the possibility that he is right) then we cannot give an abstract account of the dialectic, or more generally 'speculative philosophy' that would be adequate to it. Hegel's 'dialectic' is not some method that can be formalized. Properly speaking, 'dialectic' for him refers to the whole movement of the *Phenomenology* and the *Encyclopedia*. When so understood, then 'dialectic' and 'speculative philosophy' are almost, but not quite, synonymous: using an image of Hegel's, to take them as synonymous would be to take a circle as just its circumference without its center (but in truth there is no circle without the unity of both). Although we cannot give an adequate abstract account of Hegel's dialectic, we *can* orient ourselves to it, so that the details are more meaningful.¹⁸³ We are in the difficult position of treating it at either extreme of the macro- or the micro-level, there is no convenient middle

generally could only appear as dogmatic assumptions (cf. for example, PhG, §§1-6). We could add to this that at the most they could be present to us initially as regulative ideals, though Hegel does not use this language. However, we would have to add that we be open to the possibility that their status as merely regulative (in Kant's sense of this term) might after all be overcome in the end (their merely regulative character may turn out to be only how they *first* appear). Two texts in which Hegel gives us an introduction or overview of his system (with the above qualifications in mind) are in the Preface to the *Phenomenology* and in the Prefaces, Introduction (§§1-18), and "Preliminary Conception" (§§19-83) of the *Encyclopedia Logic* (where they introduce the system as a whole, not simply the logic). The overview which I will be developing is supported most succinctly and directly by the Prefaces and Introduction (§§ 1-18) of EL. (Hegel also gives a very helpful overview of 'true philosophy' in the Introduction to the LHP.)

183. Part of that orientation will involve clarifying what Hegel's dialectic could *not* be.

ground (even to understand this, I would claim, is to understand something important about Hegel's conception of philosophy). I will turn to the micro-level in my final chapter, treating one very circumscribed moment in the dialectic (i.e. in the whole movement of the *Encyclopedia*).¹⁸⁴ Following the macro-level treatment in this chapter, I will, in the next chapter, address the question of why Hegel might think we would give this dialectic a chance (since he cannot define it ahead of time for us, let alone justify it).¹⁸⁵ Part of what I will be arguing in the next chapter is that the whole movement of the *Encyclopedia* has a structural similarity to Descartes' *cogito*: it is something which we must enter into ourselves and discover for ourselves what the result is. Hegel's system is not a set of propositions which we can understand and then ask whether they are warranted. Meaning and justification are not independent in his system (this is part of what it means for content and form to be united in philosophy, a claim of Hegel's which must appear *prima facie* quite strange). The theological dimension to Hegel's system which I develop below

184. This 'movement' is a vexed matter of scholarly interpretation. As I will discuss later, Terry Pinkard (among others) takes it in a metaphorical sense to mean the logical relations within a conceptual scheme. One advantage to my interpretive view is that it brings out how we can read Hegel's texts (and how Hegel intends us to read them) in a more literal sense. (On a personal note: I have found when reading a text of Hegel's for the first time that I inevitably either set aside the colorful language and mode of expression, or treat it metaphorically (and even to add 'thing-like' nouns to the ubiquitous nominalized adjectives in his prose), in order to have something clear and distinct on which to fasten my mind. But my experience is that the more fully I come to understand - or I think I understand - the text on subsequent readings, the more I come to think that it, in the end, *can* be taken literally - and where it *can*, it *should* be.)

185. Of course, his startling claim is that we will discover that the result of the dialectic is that, in some sense, we will find it self-justifying. What I mean to be denying above is Hegel's capacity either to justify the dialectic to those who have not traversed (not experienced) it, or to justify the claim that the philosopher *should* enter into the dialectic (though he will give us *some* motivation, as I argue in the next chapter).

will help, I think, to make some sense of this and Hegel's closely related idea (or better, demand) that thinking be 'concrete.'¹⁸⁶

For Hegel, following Plato, philosophy is understood as a journey to the truth (and, as I will argue, specifically *as* a journey, its overall form will not be that of the syllogistic argumentation that philosophers might reasonably expect). This journey can be thought of as an ascent out of the Platonic cave or rising up the Platonic line to an unhypothetical knowing in which there is no sense of the content of knowledge consisting in beliefs or being a theory. Rather, knowledge will be for Hegel the truth knowing itself. And further, we will see that this is, in an important sense, an act of recollection. Hegel's conception of the basic structure of knowledge as being that of self-consciousness (the truth knowing itself) is best understood in terms of Hegel's incorporation and transformation of Plato's project of seeking a science of the Good. We cannot understand that if we set aside the theological dimension in Hegel's philosophy. In the concluding paragraphs of the *Encyclopedia* Hegel writes: "This [concept] of philosophy is the self-thinking Idea, the truth aware of itself (§236) - the logical system, but with

186. In the course of developing my interpretive view of Hegel's conception of philosophy it may seem that I am arguing for a thoroughly theocentric reading of Hegel's metaphysics (and with it epistemology), because I focus on the divine dimension. In terms of Hegel's system, if we were only to have the logic and the philosophy of nature, then we *would* have a thoroughly theocentric view, but we have the philosophy of spirit, and in this we have a humanism, but one that cannot be understood (or so I claim) without reference to the unity of the infinite and finite (contrary to Nietzsche's view that we are human in the sense of all *too* human). My emphasis (and it is only an emphasis) will be on bringing out the divine dimension.

the signification that it is universality approved and certified in concrete content as in its actuality" (§574) and "The eternal Idea, in full fruition of its essence, eternally sets itself to work, engenders and enjoys itself as absolute [Spirit]" (§577). Hegel closes the work with a quotation from Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, Book *Lambda*, vii (1072b 18-30). It is important to understand when we read this passage that Hegel takes Aristotle to be completing Plato's science of the Good.¹⁸⁷ In the passage of Aristotle's which Hegel quotes, Aristotle says that God is the principle on which the heavens and the world of nature depend, and this principle is to be understood as a divine thinking, an active contemplation without any potentiality, in which thought and its object are the same, and further that "life also belongs to God. For the actuality of thought is life, and God is that actuality; and God's self-dependent actuality is life most good and eternal" (this comes with an oblique reference to human thinking as desiring this best state).¹⁸⁸ What makes this quotation an appropriate ending to the *Encyclopedia* is that, to use Hegel's technical language, The *Encyclopedia* is meant to have been a thinking through of 'the Idea' which is first found in Plato (as 'the Good') and further determined in Aristotle (as God) in a more fully 'concrete' manner.¹⁸⁹ As is typical of Hegel, he wishes at the end of the *Encyclopedia* to return to

187. Cf. LHP, II, 117-118 and 134-141.

188. Aristotle, *Metaphysica*, trans. W.D. Ross in *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, ed. R. McKeon (New York: Random House, 1941), Book *Lambda*, ch. vii, 1072b 27-29. What remains ambiguous in Aristotle, both in the passage that Hegel quotes and in the equally famous similar passage from the *Nicomachean Ethics*, X.7, is whether we humans are capable of rising to this divine thinking or not, and if so, to what extent. Hegel is more optimistic than some commentators take Aristotle to be.

189. What these technical Hegelian terms mean will have to come out of the subsequent discussion.

the seed with which it began.¹⁹⁰ Hegel uses 'Concept' for the end which makes an activity what it is (understood as its moving principle) and 'Idea' for that activity as fully actual (we misunderstand both terms if we do not understand them teleologically). He finds in Aristotle's account of God a sublime insight into God as that activity which is absolutely free (self-determined) and complete (and is infinite in the sense of being the principle of itself and of everything else - "the heavens and the world of nature"). The project of the *Encyclopedia* is to develop that account of God further as the unity of the infinite and finite, and ultimately as Hegel's 'Idea.'¹⁹¹

Knowledge understood as the truth knowing itself will have the character of finality in being comprehensive, systematic and self-relational, and so self-justifying. If, in a very preliminary way, we wish to grasp Hegel's idea of the self-relational and so self-justifying character of *all* knowledge (and not just limited forms of finite self-consciousness), we are best served, I think, by theological terms. In Descartes' *cogito*, thought is immediately certain of

190. One might think that Hegel would choose an equally famous quotation from ch. ix of Book *Lambda* in the *Metaphysics*, which presents God as thought thinking thought (or 'thinking which is a thinking on thinking'). However, the quotation he does choose is in fact more appropriate because it refers to both the divine thinking and (at least obliquely) to its separation and relation to our thinking. This separation and relation (or, as it becomes in Hegel, distinction and unity) is of central interest to Hegel in the *Encyclopedia*.

191. Wallace's reference to Aristotle's *Metaphysics* for this passage does not accord with present day numbering of the Books of the *Metaphysics*. Wallace gives Book XI rather than Book XII (*Lambda*). Presumably this is because the edition he was working with did not accept our presently accepted Book II (*Alpha Elatton*) as a separate, or even authentic, book. Hegel simply gives the text in Greek without any citation.

itself, there is no mediation of its certainty through something other than what it is certain of. In this there is a circularity, but not a problematic circularity: thought must *be*, to be certain of itself. The certainty is self-contained or self-justified. Now consider the ancient and mediaeval idea of God as the pure activity of divine thinking knowing itself, and imagine this as a divine Cartesian *cogito*. Add to this Hegel's view that God's divine activity has nature and history within it, that nature and history are the outward expression of this activity, and that knowing is the return to what these are an expression of. This 'divine *cogito*' (here not just certain of itself but knowing itself) is self-enclosed, not in the sense of being cut off from anything other, but by being all that is actual. As self-enclosed it will be self-justifying. Hegel will even speak of it as an immediate knowing, because it is not mediated by anything outside of it (there being nothing outside of it) or as an act of self-mediation.

The over-arching structure of the movement to this absolute knowing (which is the truth knowing itself) is properly understood as the movement from the less adequate to the fully adequate. This is in contrast to the movement of a deduction in which we begin with an isolated truth or truths and, via a truth-preserving inference pattern, move to some other isolated truth(s).¹⁹² It is also different from an inference to best explanation, because that must start with something known (adequately known) which stands in need of explanation. For the same reason, while Hegel's approach often has a similarity to a transcendental argument, the over-arching

192. In contrast to the idea of inference as preserving truth, in Hegel we would have to speak of a movement through which the truth develops.

structure cannot be so understood (because there is no given which remains simply as a given from which to start a transcendental argument).¹⁹³ If such an Hegelian movement or journey is possible it will turn out to have a teleological structure, though one only known explicitly and fully in retrospect. Hegel understands his system (or, as he would say, just philosophy itself) to have an internal teleological structure (not to be confused with an external teleology). As such it is, as a whole, a kind of self-discovery, which has the form of a return to self. We will find this easier to imagine if we think of God's self-knowledge, and more specifically of God's creative act and knowledge of Himself in this. (Hegel would add that in this divine knowledge God knows creation as necessary to Himself, knows that he must manifest Himself to be divine.) It is more difficult to understand it in terms of a (presumed) finite knowing. It must suffice to say at this point that Hegel understands there to be, ultimately, a unity of the divine and human, and so he will speak of Spirit or of Reason (*simpliciter*) coming to know itself in its other. This is a form of self-consciousness, but not of self-consciousness as *opposed* to consciousness of something else. (I will be returning to this point.)

In terms of Plato's image of the line, philosophy is the movement upwards in which the opposition of subject and object is increasingly overcome until in the end there is a distinction but no opposition. It is for this reason that in true knowing, for Hegel, it no longer makes sense to speak of belief or theory - there is not the gap between knower and known that would make

193. None of this means that we cannot find deductions and transcendental arguments *within* the larger fabric of Hegel's system, only that the over-arching form cannot be of either sort.

such concepts relevant.¹⁹⁴ We might term this an 'identity theory' of truth, but we would have to be careful in this - the sense of 'identity' would have to be Hegelian, which is to say, a dialectical identity, not the straightforward identity of ordinary logic. Thus Hegel writes in the final sections of the *Phenomenology*:

Spirit ... has shown itself to us to be neither merely the withdrawal of self-consciousness into its pure inwardness, nor the mere submergence of self-consciousness into substance, and the non-being of its [moment of] difference; but Spirit is *this movement* of the Self which empties itself of itself and sinks itself into its substance, and also, as Subject, has gone out of that substance into itself, making the substance into an object and a content at the same time as it cancels this difference between objectivity and content ... the power of Spirit lies ... in remaining the selfsame Spirit, in its externalization and, as that which is both *in itself* and *for itself*, in making its *being-for-self* no less merely a moment than its in-itself; nor is Spirit a *tertium quid* that casts the differences back into the abyss of the Absolute and declares that therein they are all the same; on the contrary, knowing is this seeming inactivity which merely contemplates how what is differentiated spontaneously moves in its own self and returns into its unity.¹⁹⁵

Hegel's *Phenomenology* is intended to bring us to the point of being certain of the (Hegelian) identity of subject and object, knower and known, and to be the revelation that, as rational (as thinking), we are always already in the process of rising up the Platonic line to the

194. Thus LHP, II, 148: "We [Hegel] in our way of speaking designate the Absolute, the True, as the unity of subjectivity and objectivity, which is therefore neither the one nor the other, and yet just as much the one as the other."

195. PhG, §804. Here and elsewhere in this chapter I quote Hegel at length. This is a consequence of the form of his expression. To the extent that we can speak of a 'unit' of thought in his work it is often at the level of entire paragraphs or even chapters. Single sentences, extracted and quoted, are often hopeless at expressing what he is actually saying, or worse, misleading. On this I am in agreement with Yirmiahu Yovel (cf. *Hegel's Preface to the Phenomenology of Spirit* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 2005), 103.)

perspective of this identity.¹⁹⁶ Hegel's *Encyclopedia* is intended to be the articulation of that (Hegelian) unity, of absolute knowing. To be more precise about the form in which Hegel thinks this must be understood (i.e. to be more precise about the intention of the *Encyclopedia*): our own thinking through of the content of the *Encyclopedia* from the perspective of the concept (more on what this is in a moment) is to be thought's articulation (recollection) of this dialectical unity of subject and object to itself.¹⁹⁷ To actually possess such knowledge (or again, to be more

196. The *Phenomenology* presents us with the idea that consciousness just *is* knowing, and (when it is rational) is always seeking to be a true knowing. The journey that proceeds from consciousness' capacity for self-critique leads it to find that the true structure of knowledge is the structure of self-consciousness.

197. Hegel's view is that this unity will have the structure of the unity of self-consciousness. It is not the unity of a point, but of knower and known in self-consciousness. The geometric image which Hegel prefers is that of the unity of the center and circumference in a circle (cf. LHP, II, 146). Aristotle's God, conceived as thought thinking thought ("*estin e noesis noeseos noesis*," *Metaphysica*, Book *Lambda*, ch. ix, 1074b33-5) and as the prime mover who moves by being loved is the paradigm (or better, adumbration) of Hegel's conception of knowledge, which is to say his conception of absolute knowing (since a true knowing, *is* absolute knowing) and of that absolute knowing as our proper end (cf. in particular, LHP, II, 137-153). We find Hegel uncommonly enthusiastic when he discusses Aristotle in the LHP on the structure of God's activity and His relation to the world, exclaiming parenthetically "we scarcely believe our eyes" (LHP, II, 146). Aristotle is always (often like Hegel) the briefest when we would hope for full explication. His view of God as *noesis noeseos* has received interpretations ranging from the deflationary (for ex. in W. D. Ross, *Aristotle* (New York: Meridian Books, 1059), 179) to the richly theological and systematic. Examples of the latter interpretation (which support Hegel's reading of it), are Thomas De Koninck, "Aristotle on God as Thought Thinking Itself," *The Review of Metaphysics* 47, no. 3 (Mar. 1994): 471-515; J. P. Atherton, "Aristotle" in *Classical Mediterranean Spirituality*, ed. A. H. Armstrong (New York: Crossroad Publishing, 1986): 121-134; and Jonathan Lear, *Aristotle: the Desire to Understand* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 300. For an argument complementary to these that Aristotle's theology is, in his *Metaphysics*, argued to be central to the possibility of philosophy, cf. Lawrence Bruce-Robertson, "A Commentary on Book *Alpha Elatton* of Aristotle's *Metaphysics*," *Animus: the Canadian Journal of Philosophy and the Humanities* 7, Supplementa (2002).

precise from Hegel's perspective, to be the activity which is this knowing) in which the opposition of subject and object is overcome would be to overcome the Platonic *chorismos* (separation) of intelligible and sensible. Hegel's way of asserting that this is in principle overcome (or from the standpoint of the *Encyclopedia*, has been overcome) is to speak of thought as overgrasping its other.¹⁹⁸ This central idea of Hegel's is first expressed in the Introduction to the *Phenomenology*, where it is argued that it must obtain, even if we do not understand how. The argument there is that for us to be able to compare what we take to be our knowledge of an object with the object itself, in order to evaluate the adequacy of our knowing, as strange as it may seem, thought must already be on both sides of the opposition of thinking and being, so that this comparison can take place within thought.¹⁹⁹ It is the possibility of that

198. Hegel's idea that thought 'overgrasps' (*übergreifen*) its other is often not sufficiently attended to amongst interpreters (an exception is Emil Fackenheim in *The Religious Dimension of Hegel's Thought*). On this idea cf., for example, EL, §20 R: "It will be seen in the *Logic* that this is just what thought and the universal are: that thought is itself and its other, that it overgrasps its other and that nothing escapes it" and EL, §24 A1: "If we regard thinking as what is genuinely universal in everything natural and everything spiritual, too, then it overgrasps all of them and is the foundation of them all." We can see a direct relation to Anaxagoras as intuiting the overgrasping of thought in his principle, *nous*, and Hegel naturally refers to him (without mentioning him by name) in the introductory section of the *Encyclopedia*:

the Logical is to be sought in a system of thought-determinations in which the antithesis between subjective and objective (in its usual meaning) disappears. This meaning of thinking and of its determinations is more precisely expressed by the Ancients when they say that *nous* governs the world or by our own saying that there is reason in the world, by which we mean that reason is the soul of the world, inhabits it, and is immanent in it, as its own, innermost nature, its universal (EL, §24 A1).

199. PhG, 46-58. With this argument we already have an argument that epistemology and

self-critique that enables the movement of the *Phenomenology*. That the distinction of thinking and being could itself be within thinking we might more easily grant if we have in mind a divine thinking, Plato's Good understood now as divine activity (and so as subject as well as substance). That activity in its totality is Hegel's 'Actuality.' As noted above, for Hegel, an important development in the history of philosophy between Plato and Aristotle is that Aristotle has come to see the first principle in terms of *energeia* and *entelecheia*, which Hegel interprets as meaning that the first principle is pure spontaneous activity having its end in itself and being the realization of this end (LHP, II, 138-9). This is not, in Hegel's judgment, a turning away from Plato's view, but rather is what is needed to complete it (LHP, II, 137-153). It is a small step to Hegel's conception of this pure activity as subject.²⁰⁰ One might say, with this Hegelian

metaphysics are unable to be kept separate. I have not done justice to Hegel's specific argument in the Introduction - in particular I have not brought out how in it he argues that both the knowing of the object and the object itself change. But for my purposes it is enough to see Hegel's point that a comparison can only be made within thought and that the resulting view of reason is connected by Hegel to Anaxagoras' *nous* - the one reason which is in us and in the world. On this point it is natural for us to wonder how best to relate Hegel's position to that of Kant's on the limitation of human understanding. This is beyond the scope of my present project, but I will make two comments: 1) Hegel takes ancient skepticism to have already thrown into question, more thoroughly than the early moderns and Kant, the adequacy of an (assumed) finite human thinking (part of the assumption involved in the assumption that this thinking is finite is the assumption that this thinking is other than and opposed to the truth it would know, the objects it would know) (cf. for example, LHP, II, 328-333 and EL, §39R); 2) I think we must say that for Hegel, Kant assumes, rather than demonstrates, that human thinking is finite (cf. for example, PhG, §74-76 and EL, §60 with §60R, A1, and A2). If this is so, then there is reason to be open to the possibility that philosophy includes the discovery that our human thinking is not merely finite.

200. On Hegel's synthesis of Aristotle's 'activity' with (early modern philosophy's) 'subjectivity' cf. Alfredo Ferrarin, *Hegel and Aristotle* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), especially 15-31.

conception, that Plato's Good becomes the one activity which is the creating and overcoming of the *chorismos*. It is not accidental that both Plato and Aristotle come to Hegel's mind when he is lecturing on the *Encyclopedia Logic* at the point where the category of actuality is introduced. Hegel argues that both the terms 'thought' and 'actuality' are misused (or misunderstood) when used in philosophical discussion in the same way as they are customarily used in ordinary life (the idea being that in ordinary life 'thought' is used to refer to what is abstract and to what is often an unrealized, even unrealizable goal, and 'actual' is used to refer to anything which happens to exist). He comments:

The ground of a widespread prejudice about the relationship between the philosophies of Aristotle and Plato must also be looked for in the common interpretation of actuality that we are here discussing, and in the confusion of actuality with what is tangible and immediately perceptible. According to this prejudice, the difference between Plato and Aristotle is supposed to be that, whereas the former recognizes the Idea and only the Idea as what is true, the latter, in contrast, rejects the Idea, and clings to what is actual; for that reason he should be considered the founder and leader of empiricism. On this head it must be remarked that actuality certainly does form the principle of Aristotle's philosophy, but his actuality is that of the Idea itself, and not the ordinary actuality of what is immediately present. More precisely, therefore, Aristotle's polemic against Plato consists in his designation of the Platonic Idea as mere *dynamis*, and in urging, on the contrary, that the Idea, which is recognized by both of them equally to be what is alone true, should be regarded essentially as *energeia*, i.e., as the inwardness that is totally to the fore, so that it is the unity of inward and outward. In other words, the Idea should be regarded as Actuality in the emphatic sense that we have given to it here (EL, §142 A).

I said above that we might more easily grant that the distinction of thinking and being could itself be within thinking if we have in mind a divine thinking. It is more difficult to understand

what this could mean in the context of finite human thinking. But Hegel's contention is that there really is no such thing as *merely* finite thinking: if philosophy - conceived of as rising up the Platonic line - were to possess its goal (Hegel would say more precisely, if philosophy were, as activity, in possession of itself), it would mean that we would come to see that there is a unity of infinite and finite in the thinking of the truth. I will return later to Hegel's further contention that insofar as we think at all, we are already in the process of rising to this perspective (and so our thinking is never merely finite).²⁰¹

Put in terms of religious representation, Hegel's view is that God (understood as pure activity, an activity which is free and complete, thought of as both substance and subject) actualizes Himself²⁰² in and through nature and history, and that the culmination of this self-

201. CF., for example, EL, §50 R:

the inward journey of the spirit ... is a *thinking* journey and it thinks what is sensory. The *elevation* of thinking above the sensible, its *going out* above the finite to the infinite, the *leap* that is made into the supersensible when the sequences of the sensible are broken off, all this is thinking itself; this transition is *only thinking*. To say that this passage ought not to take place means that there is to be no thinking.

If in the end we know Hegel's claim as true, it will be in the form of a truth discovered, not proven, at least not in the usual sense of proof in which one claim is warranted by others. It will be thinking, returning to itself in knowing itself as infinite.

202. Throughout when referring to Hegel's God I use the masculine pronoun forms because Hegel himself consistently affirms that orthodox Christian theology, while not fully adequate in its form as religious representation, has the same content as true philosophy. It is a difficult question whether for Hegel religion remains necessary to philosophy or is simply superseded by philosophy. (Does the speculative philosopher go to church?) How we answer that question will effect how close we stay to the traditional Christian imagery in

actualization is a self-knowing in and through *our* knowing.²⁰³ That divine self-knowing (which is necessarily a divine-human knowing) *is* philosophy in the truest sense. The category of spirit is central to Hegel, in part, because in it Hegel attempts to grasp that this process does not leave the finite individual superfluous (and so be a kind of divine solipsism) nor leave God out (and so be simply a naturalism). Hegel speaks of 'spirit' *simpliciter*, because it is at once human and divine. 'Spirit' is a very rich category for Hegel and I am only addressing one aspect of it, consequent on my focus on the theoretical over the practical. (In this chapter I will not be addressing the inter-subjective aspect of spirit in finite individuals, the role of recognition in this, and so of society, though I will turn to these in my final chapter.) The German *Geist* is doubly rich for Hegel, as our English translation cannot be for us.²⁰⁴ It is now a commonplace to criticize early translators who used 'Mind' for '*Geist*,' rather than 'Spirit.' I agree that this was misleading, but mainly because of the connotation of mind as a thing which acts, rather than as pure activity itself. Both the spiritual and the intellectual connotations of '*Geist*' are important for Hegel. The spiritual, religious, dimension - with reference in particular to the Holy Spirit of the Christian Trinity - is crucial, for in it is the dimension of an infinite activity present in the community of finite individuals. The intellectual connotation is important because, to speak in

discussing Hegel's project. Also, referring to Hegel's God as 'activity' can be awkward: as infinite, it would - strictly speaking - be inaccurate to speak of 'an activity,' rather than simply 'activity.'

203. The sense of this as a 'culmination' will be qualified shortly in my discussion of the relation of the practical and theoretical.
204. For remarks on this in the context of distinguishing Hegel from Schelling, cf. Richard Kroner, "Introduction" in G.W.F. Hegel, *Early Theological Writings*, trans. T. M. Knox (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996), 24.

religious terms, God's return to Himself is a thinking return (which we find in art, religion, and philosophy).²⁰⁵ There is the added complexity to Hegel's view that, as with Luther so in Hegel, we find a drawing together of the practical and the theoretical. In this discussion I treat only the theoretical. The reason for this, as I will come to later, is that Hegel sees philosophy as the most adequate return to the truth and my concern is with his conception of philosophy (also more on

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205. Without the theological reference we can say the following of Hegel's view: our grasping of the truth is a thinking grasp, even in those forms that might be thought to be antagonistic to, or outside of, thought. Regarding this last point, Hegel argues that "it is a prejudice of our day and age, which separates *feeling* and *thinking* from each other in such a way that they are supposedly opposed to each other" (EL, §2 R). The content of consciousness is thought, whatever be its form:

Whatever kind it may be, the *content* that fills our consciousness is what makes up the *determinacy* of our feelings, intuitions, images and representations, of our purposes, duties, etc., and of our thoughts and concepts. Hence feeling, intuition, image, etc., are *the forms* of this content, a content that remains *one and the same*, whether it be felt, intuited, represented, or willed, and whether it be *only* felt, or felt, intuited, etc., with an admixture of thought, or whether it is thought quite *without any admixture* (EL, §3).

Note that in the above we must distinguish between the form of consciousness as thought and the content of consciousness as thought. What Hegel is arguing is that the content of all the forms of consciousness (thought, feeling, etc.) are one and the same, namely, thought. On God's return to Himself as a thinking return (to use religious language for what Hegel takes to be happening in philosophy) cf. the following:

The need for philosophy can be determined more precisely in the following manner. As feeling and intuition the spirit has what is sensible for its [object]; as fantasy, it has images; and as will, purposes, etc. But the spirit needs also, in *antithesis* to, or merely in *distinction from these forms* of its thereness and of its [objects], to give satisfaction to its highest inwardness, *to thinking*, and to make thinking its [object]. In this way, spirit comes *to itself*, in the deepest sense of the word; for its principle, its unadulterated selfhood, is thinking (EL, §11).

'knowing' as a return in a bit). To speak at the most abstract level, and again theologically, we could think of God as one (pure, infinite) unified activity of creating and returning to Himself where the moment of creating is understood as the practical and the moment of return is understood as the theoretical. Neither moment is higher, neither of more dignity, each needs the other. The same structure obtains at the level of the individual: in praxis we find (know) our freedom (that is, in Hegel's view, our true self). There is need of the practical - the doing or creating, and of the theoretical - the recognition of our freedom in it. By 'theoretical' here I mean, not some esoteric learning, but the knowing, in various forms, of our freedom, from the most primitive form of simply feeling it to the more developed articulations of knowing it as found in art, religion, and philosophy.

I am presenting Hegel's view as best understood as a deeply theological view (and as systematic and unified, hence the theology is pervasive). Re-constructions of his thought which set the theology aside are most successful with respect to his ethical and social thought, precisely because in these realms we can still comprehend a teleological structure (admittedly less full-blown than Hegel thinks it is), because in these realms (and in culture more generally) we produce ourselves and our (cultural) world, and the making involves inter-subjectivity (so retaining some sense of Hegel's 'spirit') and we *find* ourselves in what we have made, being at home in it if we find our true selves - our freedom, or feeling alienated from it if we find what we have made is inadequate to our true self, our freedom (this is the internal teleology). This finding of being at home or of alienation is the theoretical side, in the sense of 'theoretical' that I have

been using above.

In the Introduction to LHP, I, Hegel expresses an idea which recurs throughout his work, namely that the content of art and religion and philosophy are one, only the form different (though this is a big 'only'): "the form in which the universal content which is in and for itself, [*sic*] first belongs to Philosophy is the form of Thought, the form of the universal itself. In Religion, however, this content is for immediate and outward perception, and further for idea and sensation through art" (67). In the context of this discussion of the one content that is grasped variously in these forms, Hegel gives an account of the one divine activity I speak of above (understood as a going out and a return to self, as in the *exitus* and *reditus* of Christian platonic theology):

There is only one Spirit, the universal divine Spirit. Not that it is merely everywhere; it is not to be comprehended as what is common to everything, as an external totality, to be found in many or in all individuals, which are essentially individuals; but it must be understood as that which permeates through everything, as the unity of itself and of a semblance²⁰⁶ of its 'other,' as of the subjective and particular. As universal, it is object to itself, and thus determined as a particular, it is this individual: but as universal it reaches over this its 'other,' so that its 'other' and itself are comprised in one. The true universality seems, popularly expressed, to be two - what is common to the universal and to the particular. A division is formed in the understanding of itself, and the Spirit is the unity of what is understood and the understanding person. The divine Spirit which is comprehended, is objective; the subjective Spirit comprehends. But

206. The German is *Schein* and is very difficult to translate adequately. It can have the connotation of deceptiveness but also of reflection. For comments on the translation difficulties of *Schein*, see H. S. Harris and T. F. Geraets, "Introduction," in *The Encyclopedia Logic* (Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Co., 1991), xv-xvi.

Spirit is not passive, or else the passivity can be momentary only; there is one spiritual substantial unity. The subjective Spirit is the active, but the objective Spirit is itself this activity; the active subjective Spirit is that which comprehends the divine, and in its comprehension of it it is itself the divine Spirit. The relation of Spirit to self alone is the absolute determination; the divine Spirit lives in its own communion and presence (LHP, I, 72-3).

But are we, in the end, lead necessarily to think of Hegel's view as a form of pantheism and of Hegel's God as purely immanent? These are important questions that are not limited to an interest in Hegel's philosophy of religion. How we answer them will effect how adequate we judge traditional, orthodox theological terms and doctrines to be in helping us to understand what Hegel's view of philosophy is. Are they a kind of 'second-best-method' in relation to speculative thinking? Or are they misleading? Is Hegel's use of them literal (if at the same time dialectical) or is it metaphorical or is it a form of rhetorical flourish? There is much to be said for taking Hegel's view to be a pantheism and immanentism (which explains the popularity of doing so), but ultimately I think we must reject each as adequate to what Hegel intends.²⁰⁷ It is interesting that Hegel repeatedly denies that pantheism is true (usually with respect to defending Spinoza

207. One might think he intends something more or believes he has grasped something more, but has not in fact accomplished this, in which case his view might end up being a form of pantheism and immanentism contrary to his intent or self-understanding. For the view that Hegel is a straightforward pantheist (not an unwilling one) cf. Yirmiahu Yovel, "Hegel's Dictum that the Rational is Actual and the Actual is Rational: Its Ontological Content and Its Function in Discourse," in *The Hegel Myths and Legends*, ed. Jon Stewart (Evanston: Northwestern University Press: 1996), 26-41. I suspect from what Yovel says, however, that any theological view in which God is not absolutely transcendent is necessarily a form of pantheism (so the status of Hegel as pantheist or not is part of the more general question of whether a theology that affirms the incarnation of God is necessarily caught up in pantheism).

against this charge, but always at the same time indirectly defending himself against it).²⁰⁸ The central point he makes in these defenses is that pantheism is the view that God is just the sum of nature, which is to deny the infinite (or at least to deny the 'true infinite'). Hegel's God manifests Himself (which is for Hegel to actualize Himself) through nature and history, and so the finite is the expression of the infinite. As such it would be more accurate to describe Hegel's God, not as immanent, but as incarnate. The difference is subtle but important: there is a (logical and teleological) priority of the infinite in the idea of God incarnate.²⁰⁹

It is not accidental that Hegel gives us a lengthy discussion about pantheism when he discusses absolute knowing in the *Encyclopedia* (in the conclusion to Enc, III).²¹⁰ If we have understood his argument, he expects us to be very likely to mistake his view for a form of pantheism. In fact, we might take his view in one of two opposing ways: that in the end the finite is just a nullity or that in the end the divine has been fully naturalized (and so not in fact divine except in a metaphorical sense). Interpreters who feel intuitively drawn to one side or the other will fall into right- and left-wing interpretations.²¹¹ Further, if we re-construct Hegel's

208. For example, Enc, III, §573.

209. And as we shall see, this priority of the infinite over the finite is at the heart of why philosophy, for Hegel, is necessarily understood as a form of idealism. Interpreting Hegel naturalistically and taking spirit or thinking to supervene on the material might lead to a very interesting philosophical view, but it would not be Hegel's.

210. We get an unusually expansive 11 pages on pantheism in §573. With this cf. EL, §36 R and EL, §50 R.

211. On this interpretive divide see Emil Fackenheim, *The Religious Dimension of Hegel's Thought*, especially 75-112.

philosophy in a non-speculative form, that is, a form that is fully accessible to what Hegel terms the 'understanding,' and in this re-construction demand that nothing be left as a mystery to the understanding, then we *must* choose one side or the other.²¹²

Hegel would say of (late) mediaeval philosophy in general that it 'nests in the categories of the understanding' (to borrow Hegel's image)²¹³ and so uses a logic to reflect on (what Hegel takes to be) the Christian truth that is not up to the task. But it accepts a limitation to what the understanding is capable of and so does not dismiss what appears mysterious to the understanding. Hence philosophy is (problematically for Hegel) understood by these late mediaevals as the handmaiden to theology. (Hegel's focus is consistently on late mediaeval philosophy and so is only relevant to the understanding of the relation between philosophy and

212. This is a dramatic instance of where setting aside Hegel's form of argument (or form of presentation of philosophical content) means radically altering that content. On Hegel's technical use of 'the understanding' see, for example, EL, §25:

If the thought-determinations are afflicted with a fixed antithesis, i.e., if they are only of a *finite* nature, then they are inadequate to the truth which is absolutely in and for itself, and the truth cannot enter into thinking. The thinking that brings forth only *finite* determinations and moves within these alone is called *understanding* (in the more precise sense of the word). The *finitude* of the thought-determinations has further to be taken in two ways: first, they are *only subjective* and are permanently in antithesis to the objective; secondly, being quite generally of *limited content*, they persist both in their antithesis to each other, and (even more) in their antithesis to the Absolute.

213. For example, EL, 1827 Preface, p.11.

theology specific to that period.)²¹⁴

The most natural form of re-constructing Hegel's thought would articulate it in the form of propositions linked via syllogisms. Philosophers have different reasons for engaging in this kind of re-constructive project. To say that this approach necessarily leads to a one-sided reading of Hegel is not to condemn it, but simply to bring out that what Hegel takes to be the proper form of philosophy will not allow itself to be so re-constructed (for better or for worse).²¹⁵ This is part of the reason Hegel's thought can seem like an impenetrable universe of its own that one is either on the outside of (and so left commenting on in a one-sided manner) or inside of (and so appearing - from the outside at least - as a 'believer' rather than an understanding philosopher).

The two points above are connected. Hegel is often quite vociferous in his criticism of (late) mediaeval philosophers, and I would suggest that the reason for this is that he sees them as engaged in the same (for him) problematic task as he would see those who would re-construct his thought in the form of propositions. In his view, each is trying to comprehend a truth that cannot be grasped in the form of propositions and syllogisms. Here is a standard remark of Hegel's on this point, in which 'formal thought' (i.e. the adherence to the proposition and syllogism as basic)

214. Cf. LHP, III, 37-107.

215. The Preface to the Second Edition of the *Encyclopedia Logic* (1827) focuses on the idea that only 'true' (i.e. speculative) philosophy attains to 'scientific cognition' of the truth, that outside of this, religion imperfectly grasps that truth, and that truth remains a mystery to the 'understanding' (EL, pp. 4-17).

is contrasted with thinking 'in the shape of the Concept':

the impulse of thought announces itself in the very phenomena of the time that we have taken note of in this foreword; and that is why, for the thought that is cultivated to the high level of the spirit, it is in and for itself a need (for both the thinker and the time) that what was revealed as a mystery in earlier times should now be revealed for thinking itself. (The mystery remains a complete secret for formal thought, even in the purer configuration of its revelation, and still more in the cloudier ones.) This task alone is therefore worthy of our science, and in the absolute right of its freedom, thinking affirms the stubborn determination only to be reconciled with the solid content so far as that content has, at the same time, been able to give itself the shape that is most worthy of it. This is the shape of the Concept, the shape of necessity that binds all, content and thoughts alike, and precisely thereby makes them free. If we are to renew what is old - and I speak only of the configuration as being old, because the basic import itself is ever young - then perhaps the configuration of the Idea as Plato, and much more deeply Aristotle, gave it to us is infinitely more worthy of recollection. This is also because the unveiling of the Idea through its adaptation to our intellectual culture is at once not merely an understanding of that Idea, but an advance of science itself.²¹⁶

The intent of Hegel's speculative form of philosophizing (thinking in 'the shape of the Concept') is that it is, he thinks, capable of uniting these two sides (the infinite, or divine, and the finite).²¹⁷ We might approach the question of the adequacy of thinking of God as transcendent or immanent in a preliminary way as follows: if we can speak of 'God's perspective' (the perspective of an infinite knowing), God would not see Himself as transcendent, for there is not a creation that is independent enough for this to be the case, but neither would He see Himself as

216. EL, 1827 Preface, pp. 16-17.

217. I will return to say more about what this form entails. It suffices to say here that for Hegel, the true form of philosophy - whatever that turns out to be - must be capable of uniting these two sides without simply reducing one to the other.

immanent: the very terms of the opposition are no longer sufficient from this perspective (as likewise Hegel says of the opposition of subject and object in absolute knowing).²¹⁸ The whole of creation is within the divine activity, nothing is 'outside' or 'below' it. In the *Phenomenology* the (Hegelian conception of) the true infinite appears out of (is the result of) the difficult section on "Force and the Understanding."²¹⁹ With it we enter the territory of the 'Concept' and the structure of self-consciousness. Hyppolite's *Genesis and Structure of Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit* has some of the most helpful commentary on this section.²²⁰ Some remarks in the *Encyclopedia Logic* are simpler: "the genuine infinite is not merely a realm beyond the finite: on the contrary, it contains the finite sublated within itself. The same holds for the *Idea*"²²¹ and "the genuine Infinite ... consists ... in remaining at home with itself in its other, or (when it is expressed as a process) in coming to itself in its other."²²² We might think of the true infinite as the unity of the infinite and the finite. Hegel argues that this is true, but that the expression suffers from treating the infinite and the finite as opposed, as two things brought together (which would make the infinite a finite thing). Hegel's solution is to see this unity as one in which the infinite sublates the finite. There is a clear priority of infinite over finite here (as Hegel notes in

218. On overcoming the opposition of subject and object in absolute knowing, cf. for example, PhG, Preface, §39: "to talk of the *unity* of subject and object, of finite and infinite, of being and thought, etc. is inept, since object and subject, etc. signify what they are *outside* of their unity ... in their unity they are not meant to be what their expression says they are."

219. PhG, §§162-3.

220. See in particular Jean Hyppolite, *Genesis and Structure of Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. S. Cherniak and J. Heckman (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1974), 118-139 and 149-151.

221. EL, §45 A.

222. EL, §94 A.

the text quoted above).²²³ If we loose sight of the priority of the infinite over the finite, Hegel's view can easily appear as a kind of naturalism and pantheism.²²⁴ The priority of the infinite over the finite is a central feature of Hegel's conception of the truth and hence of the nature of philosophy:

the genuine Infinite does not merely behave like the one-sided acid; on the contrary it preserves itself; the negation of the negation is not a neutralization; the Infinite is the affirmative, and it is only the finite which is sublated ... the truth of the finite is ... its *ideality*. In the same way the infinite of the understanding, which is put *beside* the finite, is itself also only one of two finites, something-untrue, something-ideal. This ideality of the finite is the most important

223. EL, 1827 Preface, pp. 16-17.

224. For such an interpretation see Frederick Beiser, "Hegel's Historicism," in *The Cambridge Companion to Hegel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 270-300. Hegel's view can easily appear to be very close to philosophical naturalism (and aspects of it provide ample resources for the development of a thoroughly naturalistic view), and yet at its heart it is so far from it, precisely because of the priority of the infinite over the finite. Hegel's response to dualism is neither materialism nor Berkelian idealism, it does not assert a (normal, formal) identity between mind and matter. Rather, it posits a dialectical unity which demands the category of Spirit, and of infinite Spirit. Here is Hegel in the closing paragraph of the *Encyclopedia* in which he speaks of the self-mediation of infinite Spirit as 'syllogism' (*Schluß*):

The third syllogism is the Idea of philosophy, which has self-knowing reason, the absolutely universal, for its middle term: a middle, which divides itself into Mind [*Geist*] and Nature, making the former its presupposition, as process of the Idea's subjective activity, and the latter its universal extreme, as process of the objectively and implicitly existing Idea. The self-judging of the Idea into its two appearances (§§575, 576) characterizes both as its (the self-knowing reason's) manifestations: and in it there is a unification of the two aspects: - it is the nature of the fact, the [Concept], which causes the movement and development, yet this same movement is equally the action of cognition. The eternal Idea, in full fruition of its essence, eternally sets itself to work, engenders and enjoys itself as absolute [*Geist*] (Enc, III, §577).

proposition of philosophy, and for that reason every genuine philosophy is *Idealism*. Everything depends on not mistaking for the Infinite that which is at once reduced in its determination to what is particular and finite. - That is why we have drawn attention to this distinction at some length; the basic concept of philosophy, the genuine Infinite, depends on it.²²⁵

From the finite perspective we are left with the need to speak of the divine in terms of both transcendence (to refer to the inner and eternal truth which, as infinite, transcends the finite) and immanence (to refer to the necessity of the outward manifestation of this inner truth).²²⁶ Keeping in mind the priority of the infinite over the finite, Hegel's final position is not that God is immanent in nature and history, but that He is fully present, fully manifested, fully revealed. This is why Hegel can say with all sincerity that he is and remains an orthodox Lutheran.²²⁷ If

225. EL, §95 R, with this also cf. EL, §111.

226. For the latter idea cf. EL on 'appearance' and 'actuality' (§§132-141 and §§142-149).

227. It also explains why Hegel says that philosophy has nothing to be embarrassed about on account of faith (by which he means faith in general and also specifically faith as developed into the reformed Lutheran Christianity of his time, cf. for example, Enc, III, §573). No correction of religious consciousness is needed. That consciousness, like the understanding, has the finite perspective for its element, and from *that* perspective, God as infinite *is* transcendent and at the same time, God as Word *is* incarnate. For an example of his Lutheran commitment, see the Introduction to the *Lectures on the History of Philosophy* (all the more significant because it comes in the context of a discussion of philosophy as the *higher* form of grasping the truth): "I am Lutheran and will remain the same" (LHP, I, 73). In some of his early (unpublished) work, prior to the *Phenomenology*, Hegel presented faith as a higher form of grasping the truth than philosophy. Cf. "The Spirit of Christianity and Its Fate," "Love" and "Fragment of a System" in G. W. F. Hegel, *Early Theological Writings*, trans. T. M. Knox (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996), 182-320. In an important sense his position never changes: the 'philosophy' in those earlier works is what the 'understanding' is capable of, and Hegel continues to hold that the 'understanding' cannot fully adequately grasp the content of faith. What *does* change - and the change is dramatic - with the *Phenomenology* and all subsequent works, is Hegel's conviction that there is a truer form of philosophy which *is* adequate to the grasp of the

from the orthodox Christian perspective there is heresy here (contrary to Hegel's self-understanding) it is not the heresy of pantheism, but the closely related idea that creation is necessary to God's actuality, not a pure beneficent act of grace. But even here the issue is subtle and complicated. We must keep in mind that for Hegel, God is pure activity. This is a long-standing conception well-within orthodox Christian reflection. God is not understood as substance in the sense of an underlying something which then may or may not act, God is substance, but substance *is* activity, as Hegel understands it (following Aristotle, at least as interpreted by Hegel), and hence God is substance *and* subject (subject because that activity is absolutely free in the sense of self-determining, and this is just what a subject is, the activity of determining/positing oneself).²²⁸ But if God is pure act then it becomes much more difficult to separate His creation from Him. If God were a thing, which might or might not act, then we might imagine that thing creating one world here - ours - and another world somewhere 'else.' This would separate Him from His creation(s) more easily. But orthodox reflection has found it very difficult to conceive of God as a thing.

If we were to look for a philosophical precedent for Hegel's view, which could be (and

content of faith. If we, in the end, find this truer form of philosophy not to be intelligible, then Hegel would want us to revisit the question of the relation between faith and reason anew. Emil Fackenheim is one (careful and charitable) interpreter of Hegel who is brought precisely to this point, and with it is brought to the point of questioning more generally our confidence in modern secular freedom (see *The Religious Dimension of Hegel's Thought*, 223-244, and also "Would Hegel Today Be a Hegelian?" *Dialogue* 8 (1970): 222-35).

228. In other words, to fully understand Aristotle's insight that substance (*ousia*) is activity, we must add that it is subject.

historically was) confused with pantheism (because, like Hegel's, it is so close to pantheism), the 9th c. Christian Neoplatonic philosophical theology of John Scottus Eriugena in which creation is understood as *theophania*, the expression of God, is perhaps the best.²²⁹ In the *Encyclopedia Logic* section on 'appearance' Hegel argues that the distinction between inner and outer is necessary for thought, but that we must understand their (Hegelian) unity. If we keep them separate and independent, then the outer will necessarily be taken to be inessential:

Both in the study of nature and in that of the spiritual world, it is of great importance to keep the special character of the relationship between inward and outward properly in view, and to guard against the error of thinking that only what is *inward* is essential, that it is the heart of the matter, whilst, the *outward* side, on the contrary, is inessential and indifferent ... Our religion says that nature, no less than the spiritual world, is a revelation of God, and the two are distinguished from one another by the fact that, whereas nature never gets to the

229. Eriugena's *Periphyseon* (*On the Division of Nature*) was condemned - in 1050, 1059, 1210 and 1225! For details of his life see Deirdre Carabine, *John Scottus Eriugena* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), on the condemnations see *Ibid.*, 23. On Eriugena's theophanic view cf. Brian Stock, "Observations on the Use of Augustine by Johannes Scottus Eriugena," *Harvard Theological Review* 60 (1967): 123-220, and "The Philosophical Anthropology of Johannes Scottus Eriugena," in *Studi Medievali*, 3rd series, 8 (1967): 1-57. For a succinct statement here is R. D. Crouse:

In Eriugena's view, creation was eternally constituted, *primordialiter et causaliter*, in the activity of the Divine thinking, that transcendent *analytike*, in which *exitus* and *reditus*, dividing and uniting, are but two aspects of one timeless moment. Thus God is in all things, and all things are in God. All things are eternally created in the Word. God precedes creation, not by a temporal, but by a logical and ontological (and in that sense, causal) priority, as the mind precedes its thinking. The *cosmos* is the harmonious order, the unity in diversity, of Divine expression: it is *theophania* (R. D. Crouse, "Intentio Moysi: Bede, Augustine, Eriugena and Plato in the *Hexaemeron* of Honorius Augustodunensis," *Dionysius* II (1978), 142).

point of being conscious of its divine essence, it is the express task of finite spirit to achieve this. That is just why the spirit is initially finite. So those who regard the essence of nature as something merely inward and therefore inaccessible to us are adopting the standpoint of those Ancients who considered God to be jealous, a position against which Plato and Aristotle have already declared themselves. God imparts and reveals what he is, and he does it, first of all, through nature and in it (EL, §140 A).

Hegel's point in the above is that the finite, as the expression of the infinite, is essential: God fully manifest is God fully actual. But this does not deny the priority of the infinite over the finite. We cannot make sense of a subject *speaking*, or *manifesting* itself without the priority of the subject (which can be logical and ontological without being temporal). Relatedly, we cannot make sense of a teleological structure without that same priority: if there is an end realized, then the end has been present from the beginning.²³⁰ At the stage of the argument in the *Encyclopedia Logic* from which the above quotation is taken, the way in which this infinite and finite are grasped together in such a way as to preserve the priority of the infinite is to grasp them as ground and appearance (*Grund* and *Erscheinung*).²³¹ Consequent on the priority of the infinite over the finite, it would be a mistake to interpret Hegel's 'Spirit' along the lines of an emergent property from nature and equally a mistake to interpret his conception of philosophy along the lines of philosophical naturalism.

230. If this were not so, then at most we could look at a process and declare that it is *as if* it were actualizing an end (even the idea of 'process' would be suspect if taken to be anything more than what could be *viewed* as such). And if it is a matter of viewing nature and history *as if* there were an end, is it more than an arbitrary choice that we do so, rather, than for example choosing Nietzsche's view of it as the eternal recurrence of the same?

231. EL, §115-142. Appearance "comes from the ground and goes to the ground" (EL, §142).

I have presented Hegel's view of philosophy as, in the truest sense, the moment of return in the divine activity of going out and returning (with the qualification that the whole movement be understood as a single activity). This might seem to be a strange anti-humanism (Heidegger comes to mind)²³² or perhaps a form of gnosticism. However, I suggest that for Hegel, because of his affirmation (Hegel would say his discovery) of the unity of the infinite and the finite, this view turns out to be a very bold form of humanism. A Note on Hegel's idea of the unity of the infinite and the finite is appropriate here: contemporary philosophical intuitions are likely to balk at this idea as barely intelligible, if intelligible at all, but I would suggest that it is not so different from some currently acceptable ideas which are central to, even constitutive of, some contemporary philosophical views. As an example we could take that of 'supervenience.' In 1952 R. M. Hare used this term with respect to the use of 'good' in moral contexts.²³³ In 1970 Donald Davidson used it with respect to mental characteristics.²³⁴ Following on Hare and Davidson, this term has played a central role in a vast array of research projects in philosophy. Much of that research has had to work out what it *would mean* for one thing to supervene on

232. Paul Franks discusses how, for Jacobi, the self-enclosed system of Spinoza leads to nihilism (*All or Nothing*, 9-10). I take the same worry to be a possibility for a theological reading of Hegel. For examples of Heidegger's anti-humanism more readily accessible than *Being and Time* see: "Letter on Humanism," in Martin Heidegger, *Basic Writings*, ed. David Krell (Toronto: Harper Perennial, 2008), 217-265 and "The Question Concerning Technology," in Martin Heidegger, *Basic Writings*, ed. David Krell (Toronto: Harper Perennial, 2008), 311-341.

233. R. M. Hare, *The Language of Morals* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), 145.

234. Donald Davidson, "Mental Events" in *Essays on Actions and Events* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2001), 214.

another, and if that meaning is determined, whether such a relation is a *real possibility*. More than half a century later it must be said that there is no consensus on these questions, even on the question of whether it is an intelligible idea (though it is generally assumed to be). But it would be a mistake to dismiss the work of Hare or Davidson (and others) on this basis. The same could be said on a more general level about the idea of a naturalized epistemology, an idea that W. V. O. Quine gives a suggestive sketch of in "Epistemology Naturalized" which then becomes the focus of diverse research projects.²³⁵ These ideas inhabit the most primitive level of philosophizing and animate it. That philosophizing would come to a standstill if papers like "Epistemology Naturalized" were not published because they present an idea that subsequent generations work *towards* the understanding of, rather than *from* a clear and distinct understanding of (*pace* Descartes). Ultimately (for Hegel) this unity of the infinite and the finite is the ground of our freedom, or better, *is* our freedom. If Hegel is right on this score, then freedom is not to be thought of as a property of humans that we must assume as a given (or importantly *not* assume as a given, if we stand outside contemporary western liberalism). For Hegel, we are only free as *thinking* (willing is thinking 'stepping into existence')²³⁶ and as thinking we are the activity of the unity of the infinite and the finite.

This view of philosophy as the moment of return in the divine activity of going out and

235. W. V. O. Quine, "Epistemology Naturalized," in *Ontological Relativity and other Essays* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1969), 69-90.

236. Cf. PR, §4 A.

returning makes sense of Hegel's claim that there is only one philosophy, and makes sense of his presenting philosophy as a subject (in the sense of agent) with a history. We could term that subject simply thought itself (I will speak of 'Thought' and 'Reason' here, though ultimately 'Spirit' is the most adequate term).²³⁷ If this is the case, then it is appropriate to think of philosophy (and Hegel's *Encyclopedia*, at least in its intention) as a kind of recollection: Reason, or Thought, externalizes itself and then, in recognizing itself in this externalization, comes back to itself. Philosophy is that moment of return. Hence the activity of knowing is said to have the structure of self-consciousness and thought is said to be 'for-itself' in knowing.²³⁸ This movement, taken as a whole, is understood by Hegel to be the actuality of thought; the going out and return are the moments of its self-actualization. This explains why, in the Preface to the *Phenomenology*, Hegel claims that "The true shape in which truth exists can only be the

237. The capitalization of these terms in English is reasonable because of their subjectivity (even though no such distinction is available in German, since all nouns are capitalized). Given that subjectivity it can make sense to speak of us as being 'possessed by philosophy' rather than 'doing philosophy.'

238. I think it is helpful to speak of philosophy as this return, but we must qualify this with what I have said above about the unity of the practical and theoretical - we can't have one moment without the other, so strictly speaking we would have to say of knowing that it is the whole process unified. In the terms of self-consciousness, there must be a self which is known in its thinking of itself. Hegel would say of the Truth that it must posit itself to return to itself, and that whole movement is the actuality of knowing. For the idea of thought as 'for itself' in our knowing see EL, §24 A1: "thinking constitutes the substance of external things ... thinking is what is universal ... If we regard thinking as what is genuinely universal in everything natural and everything spiritual, too, then it overgrasps all of them and is the foundation of them all ... Nature does not bring the *nous* to consciousness for itself; only man reduplicates himself in such a way that he is the universal that is [present] *for* the universal." Human beings 'reduplicate' themselves because they are thought which thinks itself.

scientific system of such truth.²³⁹ It is not just *our* grasp of the truth which must be systematic, the truth itself, what is actual, must be so: "The True is the whole. But the whole is nothing other than the essence consummating itself through its development. Of the Absolute it must be said that it is essentially a *result*, that only in the *end* is it what it truly is; and that precisely in this consists its nature, viz. to be actual, subject, the spontaneous becoming of itself."²⁴⁰ Hegel repeats this thought that system is the form of knowing *and* the known when speaking of religion in the *Phenomenology*: "God is attainable in pure speculative knowledge alone and *is* only in that knowledge, and is only that knowledge itself, for He is Spirit."²⁴¹ Knowing, as the activity of the divine going out and return, is an activity which is complete, free, infinite. The result is thought's 'being at home with itself in its other.' This explains the bold claim that Hegel makes in the opening of the *Encyclopedia Logic* that philosophy grasps the Truth, understood as God.²⁴² Hegel sees this as possible only because it is a return to God, rather than a process that would rely on an inference from the finite to the infinite (I will come back to this idea at the end of this chapter where I discuss Hegel's 'proof of reason'). Plato's science of the Good is found to be possible only as the Good's science of itself.

239. PhG, §5.

240. PhG, §20.

241. PhG, §761.

242. EL, §1. It also goes some way in explaining Hegel's favored image of philosophy as forming a circle (though much more would need to be said to explain his further image of the *Encyclopedia's* three parts - logic, philosophy of nature and philosophy of spirit - as forming a circle of circles): "The essential requirement for the science of logic is not so much that the beginning be a pure immediacy, but rather that the whole of the science be within itself a circle in which the first is also the last and the last is also the first (WL, 71). Also cf. PhG, §802.

I said earlier that philosophy as recollection is a thinking 'from the perspective of the Concept.' This can be a puzzling phrase in Hegel's writing. He will speak in terms of 'thinking the truth in the form of the Concept,' and of this as being none other than 'thinking the Concept in the form of the Concept.'²⁴³ In terms of the interpretive view which I have been presenting, we could approach an understanding of what he means with two things in mind: God's infinite, free, complete activity of going forth and returning to Himself, and the unity of the infinite and the finite (so the unity of our thinking and Thought itself). Understanding the content of the *Encyclopedia* in these terms is, provisionally, to understand it 'from the perspective of the Concept.' I say 'provisionally' because Hegel would criticize (though not dismiss) such an approach in so far as it is a form of representational thinking.²⁴⁴ As such it could be said

243. We could even say that absolute knowing is the Concept knowing the Concept in the form of the Concept (based on PhG, §6, §71, and §§788-808). Out of context this must appear, if intelligible at all, as an empty phrase. At the end of his introduction to what 'science' is in the EL (§§1-18) Hegel puts it this way: "the concept of the Science ... must be grasped by the Science itself. This is even its unique purpose, deed, and goal: to arrive at the Concept of its concept and so to arrive at its return [into itself] and contentment. ... the Idea shows itself as the thinking that is strictly identical with itself, and this at once shows itself to be the activity of positing itself over against itself, in order to be for-itself, and to be, in this other, only at home with itself" (EL, §17-18).

244. We 'represent' God, the infinite, the finite, Thought (with a capital, i.e. Thought-itself) to ourselves as if these were things 'over there' (a knowing subject *versus* object known gap is constitutive of 'representational' thinking). The first step 'up' from this representational form of thinking (or expression) would be to speak of 'the divine' rather than 'God' or the 'infinite' because the latter have the connotation (even if only lingering at this stage) of one *thing* as opposed to *another*. (This would only be a first step, eventually we would have to make our way to the category of *Geist*.) Hegel will always prefer an expression which does better justice to the actual as activity, and expresses that *activity* as a dialectical uniting. The problem in this *for us* (to reverse the direction of Hegel's recurrent phrase from the

(according to Hegel) to have a right relation to the truth but not to grasp the truth adequately: in terms of the Platonic line there is still a gap between knowing subject and object known, even if that gap is due only to the form of knowing (if we can speak, as Hegel does, of less and more in knowing, if not, then we would have to say 'even if the gap is due only to the form of *attempting* to grasp the truth').

Anyone who has worked his or her way through the often tortuous text of the *Phenomenology* or of the three-part *Encyclopedia* and comes to the final section on absolute knowing in either text must surely be perplexed (if not vexed!). Where is the long-sought-for content of this knowledge? These final sections are mysteriously short - they give one the sense that Hegel thinks he has already said everything (as if these pages should have been the summing up of a section on absolute knowing that is missing). What explains this is that in an important sense for Hegel everything *has* already been said. What absolute knowing is, or will be, is the recollecting, the taking up of the whole content of the *Encyclopedia*, from the perspective of the concept - that is, from the perspective of this whole content as the self-mediating life (or, following Hegel's usage more closely, self-mediating actuality) of the Concept. The final section of the *Phenomenology* gives us a highly condensed and selective

Phenomenology - that is, assuming we are not viewing the matter from Hegel's speculative standpoint) is that such forms of expression are *necessarily* ambiguous. Hegel would say this is because we are caught in the either-or of the understanding (ex., EL, §140 A). I will later criticize Frederick Beiser's naturalistic interpretation of Hegel as being caught in this either-or logic, and so unable to maintain the systematicity in Hegel's view.

run-through of key moments that have emerged during the course of the *Phenomenology*, now articulated retrospectively from the perspective of the Concept as the divine activity knowing its own self-externalization and return to itself (in knowing itself in its other). What distinguishes the *Phenomenology* from the *Encyclopedia* is that the *Phenomenology* ends with the certainty of the Concept (we could say 'self-certainty' at this point in the argument) as being all reality, the *Encyclopedia* is to be the Concept's recollecting of this reality as its going forth and return. To add some precision to this, and an important qualification about what Hegel believes he has and has not accomplished in the *Encyclopedia*: it is more adequate to speak of Spirit as recollecting itself (since for Hegel 'Concept' connotes implicitude) and further to speak of this recollection (which is - or would be - concrete thinking) as the 'system.' Hegel's *Encyclopedia* (and all its continued filling out in Hegel's lecture series) is Hegel's attempt to express that system. Hegel discusses absolute spirit at the conclusion of the *Encyclopedia* in its three forms: art, religion and philosophy. Each is taken to grasp the truth, but only philosophy to do so fully adequately, and in that adequate grasp is seen to unify art and religion:

This cognition [philosophy as absolute knowing] is thus *recognition* of this content and its form; it is the liberation from the one-sidedness of the forms [of art and religion], elevation of them into the absolute form, which determines itself to content, remains identical with it, and is in that the cognition of that essential and actual necessity. This movement, which philosophy is, finds itself already accomplished, when at the close it seizes its own [Concept] - i.e. only *looks back* on its knowledge.²⁴⁵

245. Enc, III, §573. Without trying to do justice to Hegel's understanding of art and religion, I would gloss his view of them briefly thus: art brings out God as manifested in nature and history (or culture), and allows us to feel this; religion brings out this manifestation *as* God,

Similarly in the *Phenomenology*:

what in religion was *content* or a form for presenting an *other*, is here the *Self's* own *act*; the [Concept] requires the *content* to be the *Self's* own *act*. For this [Concept] is, as we see, the knowledge of the Self's act within itself as all essentiality and all existence, the knowledge of this subject as substance and of the substance as this knowledge of its act.²⁴⁶ Our *own* act here has been simply to *gather together* the separate moments, each of which in principle exhibits the life of Spirit in its entirety, and also to stick to the [Concept] in the form of the [Concept], the content of which would already have yielded itself in those moments and in the form of a *shape of consciousness*.

This last shape of Spirit - the Spirit which at the same time gives its complete and true content the form of the Self and thereby realizes its [Concept] as remaining in its [Concept] in this realization - this is absolute knowing; it is Spirit that knows itself in the shape of Spirit, or a *comprehensive knowing* [in terms of the Concept].²⁴⁷ Truth is not only *in itself* completely identical with certainty, but it also has the shape of self-certainty, or it is in its existence in the form of self-knowledge. Truth is the *content*, which in religion is still not identical with its certainty. But this identity is now a fact, in that the content has received the shape of the Self. As a result, that which is the very essence, viz. the [Concept], has become the element of existence, or has become the *form of objectivity* for consciousness. Spirit, *manifesting* or *appearing* in consciousness in this element,

and allows us to have a thinking grasp of this (Hegel is very clear that the development of a creed in religion is crucial to its own purpose). To use the image of the circle as philosophy, art forms the circumference, religion the center.

246. That is, substance is not an underlying something which has the property of knowing, it is the very act of knowing itself, an act which involves the divine going out and return (my note).

247. "*comprehensive knowing* [in terms of the Concept]" are Miller's embellishments, the German is simply '*begreifende Wissen*' (*Phänomenologie des Geistes*, p. 523) but Miller is entirely reasonable in translating '*begreifend*' as a rich technical term for Hegel, implying all that knowing from the perspective of the Concept entails for Hegel (however we interpret that). The English 'conceptual' would be an inadequate translation of '*begreifend*' without the background of what Hegel means by the 'Concept.'

or what is the same thing, produced in it by consciousness, *is Science*.²⁴⁸

To put the case in what must appear an enigmatic form (unless seen in light of Hegel's transformation of the Platonic project of seeking a science of the Good with its resultant theological dimension) Hegelian 'science' is the movement of the truth's return to itself.

This conception of philosophy is deeply teleological, but we must be careful not to confuse this with a kind of external teleology. If we *do* confuse it with an external teleology, then it will seem arbitrary and unjustified. Perhaps a comparison with Augustine is best: only at the end of the *Confessions* can Augustine look back and realize that all along he has been moved by the love of God: "My love is my weight (*Pondus meum amor meus*); withersoever I am moved, I am moved there by love."²⁴⁹ Augustine understands himself over the troubled course of his life as having been distracted (as opposed to being in simple error). The goal has always been present, only perverted by him. Hence each step (or misstep) is in retrospect seen as part of his journey towards the truth, not as lying outside that journey. It is appropriate then, that after the treatment of his own conversion in books 1-9 of the *Confessions*, Augustine turns to contemplate the conversion of the whole of creation in books 11-13 (indeed, he can only fully

248. PhG, §797-798.

249. Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. H. Chadwick (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), Book XIII, 9,10, translation altered following Robert Crouse, *Images of Pilgrimage: Paradise and Wilderness in Christian Spirituality* (Charlottetown: St. Peter's Publications, 1986), ch. 4.

understand the former through the latter).²⁵⁰ That is, Augustine has come to see the teleological (and for him Trinitarian) ordering of the cosmos. So too for Hegel, it is only in retrospect that we can see 'the cunning of reason,' to know the Truth in the form of the Truth, and so to know that we have always been on the way to this.²⁵¹ Quentin Lauer comments that when the reader of the *Phenomenology* has come to the end of the work, he is ready, now for the *first* time, to read it through from the beginning.²⁵² This, I think, is exactly right, for we will be in a position in which to see the internal teleology of the process (if we have arrived where Hegel believes we will have), and so in reading from the beginning understand it truly (i.e., from the perspective of the Concept) for the first time. Further, *if*, through the process of following the dialectical course of the *Phenomenology* or the *Encyclopedia* we *discover* that this has been thought's thinking of itself as all reality, then the argument will be self-justifying in a way that is similar to the movement of Descartes' *cogito*. Hegel speaks of this self-justified grasp of the truth as

250. For an account of the *Confessions* along these lines cf. Robert Crouse, " 'In Aenigmatæ Trinitas' (Confessions, XIII, 5,6): The Conversion of Philosophy in St. Augustine's Confessions," *Dionysius* XI (1987): 53-62, "Recurrere in te unum: The Pattern of St. Augustine's Confessions" in E. A. Livingstone, ed., *Studia Patristica* XIV (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1976), 389-392, "In Multa Defluximus: Confessions X, 29-43, and St Augustine's Theory of Personality" in *Neoplatonism and Early Christian Thought*, H. J. Blumenthal & R. A. Markus, eds. (London: Variorum Publications, 1981), 180-185, Colin Starnes, *Augustine's Conversion: a Guide to the Argument of Confessions I-IX* (Waterloo: W. Laurier University Press, 1990), and James Doull, "What is Augustinian 'Sapientia'?" *Dionysius* XII (1988): 61-7. For a synoptic view of Crouse's interpretation cf. Wayne Hankey, "Memoria, Intellectus, Voluntas: the Augustinian Centre of Robert Crouse's Scholarly Work," forthcoming in *Dionysius* XXX (2012).

251. On the 'cunning of reason' see *Phenomenology*, Preface, §54.

252. Quentin Lauer, *A Reading of Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*, 2nd edition (New York: Fordham University Press, 1993, reprinted 2002), 286.

'immediate.' This can be confusing (especially when it is supposed to be discovered through the process of thinking through the entire content of the *Encyclopedia*, and especially when Hegel has been at pains to convince us that nothing is immediate). What he means is that it is a movement of thought which does not rely on anything (the justification of which is not mediated by anything) outside its own movement. But because it *is* a movement Hegel will speak of it as 'self-mediating.' Customarily, when we consider the content of a proposition and wish to determine whether it is true, we look for some kind of justification, and in most cases it would be strange if the justification were simply the content itself. But the view Hegel gives us of philosophy as 'science' is that the very idea of searching for independent justification of its content becomes meaningless. The thinking which is that science Hegel will call 'concrete.' This thinking will not be 'about' the object, it will be the object itself, or more precisely, 'the truth of the object' (if we can still use the categories of subject and object), it will be (Hegel's version of) the unhypothetical knowing at the top of Plato's line.

To understand this better, we need the qualification that the object known in philosophy is what is actual, and Hegel distinguishes this from what merely exists. The first point is not so startling (though it marks an important difference from those who see philosophy as the conceiving of possibilities - including some of Hegel's contemporary interpreters), the second point is more strictly Hegelian (though, I would add, has an obvious affinity with Plato). We could express what Hegel takes will be our discovery in working through the *Phenomenology* as follows (this is a better way of expressing the matter than speaking of Hegel's 'intention,' Hegel

simply speaks of the 'result' of the argument): it is the discovery that the actual is rational (or, more precisely, as Hegel puts it in the Preface to the *Philosophy of Right*, which he quotes in the *Encyclopedia Logic*: "What is rational is actual; and what is actual is rational").²⁵³ This may not look like the object we presumed we were after (that we presumed philosophy was the grasp of) when we set out to know it. Further, we must add that even to understand the *meaning* of this 'conclusion' that the actual is the rational and the rational, actual, can itself only be a result of that extended argument.²⁵⁴

II.3. The Result of Hegel's Transformation of the Platonic Project: Thinking that is Concrete and Free

Hegel's talk of a 'concrete' thinking can be puzzling, but if I am correct in the view of

253. PR, p.20 and EL, §6 R.

254. On this I am in full agreement with Yirmiahu Yovel. Cf. "Hegel's Dictum that the Rational is Actual and the Actual is Rational: Its Ontological Content and Its Function in Discourse," in *The Hegel Myths and Legends*, ed. Jon Stewart (Evanston: Northwestern University Press: 1996) 26-41. Further helpful commentary can be found in Emil Fackenheim, "On the Actuality of the Rational and the Rationality of the Actual," in *The Hegel Myths and Legends*, ed. Jon Stewart (Evanston: Northwestern University Press: 1996), 42-49. For a preliminary sense of what is involved in the Hegelian distinction between existence and actuality, we could think of a thought and its expression in a sentence. The particular sounds exist, but are not what is actual, which is the meaning of the sentence. For a better preliminary sense we could think of the actual being the meaning which knows itself in its outward expression in those sounds. This would be to think of the the actual as that activity of expressing itself and returning returning to itself (or to think of the actual as the thought, where the thought demands its expression to be the thought that it is). In Hegel's phraseology, the thought is 'the truth of the sounds.'

what philosophical 'system' (or 'science') is for Hegel, then I think we can make sense of his use of this term. When we are thinking of an object which is (or as yet remains) external to us, our thought will be abstract, it will be a thought 'about the object' rather than a thought which 'is the object:' wherever there remains an opposition between knowing subject and object known, the knowing will necessarily be partial and so abstract.²⁵⁵ Hegel uses 'concrete' in its normal usage, meaning what is real, rather than what is only an aspect of the real. What is not so familiar to us is his talk of thought being this (or trying to be this) and perhaps also unfamiliar to us is Hegel's denial that the sensuous is (fully) real (his denial that the sensuous is 'actual'). For Hegel, what is actual is what is fully self-determined, he will say of it that its existence is adequate to its concept (in this sense it is truly 'self-identical'). This is what we might call the great 'Hegelian inversion' of common intuition (or what might be the common intuition of some of us who inhabit the lower reaches of the Platonic cave, that is, we who might begin by thinking that the sensuous is concrete and ideas abstract).²⁵⁶ If Hegel's metaphysics is right, then only the

255. For a categorial reader of Hegel, such as Klaus Hartmann, this partiality or abstractness is what is unsatisfying to us in our thinking activity, so we look to what thought can think comprehensively or thoroughly, which is itself, its own categories. In these categories there is nothing left unthought; thought is fully adequate to the thinking of them. What Hartmann denies is Hegel's claim that a fully adequate thinking just is the truth of the world.

256. J. N. Findlay speaks of the great Platonic inversion (cf. J.N. Findlay, *Plato & Platonism*, (New York: Times Books, 1978), 52-3), and I take Hegel to be involved in something similar here, only with the Platonic *chorismos* overcome (overcome *if* in the end the unity of infinite and finite can be understood/known as actual, *if* we understand in this God as fully manifest in creation). I say that for *some* of us Hegel's view is an inversion of common sense. Hegel makes the point that it is not such for the religious consciousness. Religious consciousness takes it as evident that God is the truth of the world, that Providence obtains, etc. Hegel also claims, not unreasonably, that for the common person (as opposed to the educated philosopher - especially the sophisticated empiricist) it is no

'Idea' is fully concrete (where by 'Idea' is understood the 'system' as actual, which in turn is, if I have been correct, to be understood as the divine going out and return, a return through art, religion, and - most adequately - philosophy). In this sense Hegel's view is that philosophy *is* idealism (i.e. idealism is not one theory of many in philosophy). When our thinking is no longer only *referring* to that system, but just is the thinking of its content (and to be such it must be a thinking of that content in the form of the Concept, as discussed above) then it will be concrete.²⁵⁷ If we were to discover this, then we would know the unity of the infinite and the finite, because that thinking would just be the activity of the Absolute.²⁵⁸ As such it would be

inversion. The claim is that the ordinary person is an idealist in Hegel's sense. Two things are involved in Hegel's claim: first this 'common person' believes that we come to the truth, to what is real, by thinking things, not by sensing them, and second what is true is concrete - in our thinking we *want* to grasp the true in its completeness (whether this is possible or not, and, if possible, whether we understand how it is or not). We don't set out to have a partial or abstract grasp.

257. We could add as a note to what abstract thinking is, in contrast to concrete thinking, that it necessitates talk of 'reference' as well as 'meaning.' In concrete thinking this need drops out, or, if we are to maintain any sense of reference, it is as the reference of content or meaning to itself (so it has become self-reference).
258. In the 'Preliminary Conception' section of the EL, Hegel speaks to the implicitude of this in our thinking as follows: "We usually suppose that the Absolute must lie far beyond; but it is precisely what is wholly present, what we, as thinkers, always carry with us and employ, even though we have no express consciousness of it" (§24 A2). The Phenomenology speaks to this as becoming explicit in absolute knowing:

what seems to happen outside of it, to be an activity directed against it, is really its own doing, and Substance shows itself to be essentially Subject. When it has shown this completely, Spirit has made its existence identical with its essence; it has itself for its object just as it is, and the abstract element of immediacy, and of the separation of knowing and truth, is overcome. Being is then absolutely mediated; it is a substantial content which is just as immediately the property of the 'I', it is self-like or the [Concept].

free. This means that in the end, 'speculative argument' and 'speculative thinking' are the same activity - the activity which is the system. If we were to characterize what true philosophy is for Hegel, we could simply say that it is a free thinking and a concrete thinking.

But what if that metaphysics is too much for us, what if we are at the bottom of the cave? In my next chapter I want to approach Hegel's conception of philosophy from that perspective (though even to speak of it as being this perspective demands some idea of there being a passage to the top of the cave - in other words, it will require some reference to where Hegel thinks we are headed in the end). My contention is that Hegel thinks we could only truly, or fully, understand the freedom and concreteness of thinking from within the discovery of it (that is from being that activity which is the system). A second-best grasp of it is to refer to it through theological categories. But what is interesting is that even without this we can understand a demand that thinking (or philosophy) be free and concrete (we will just not understand Hegel's view of *how* it accomplishes this and so not fully understand what it is to be the thinking which is free and concrete). The demand that thought be free comes out (if it does) in our sensitivity to the challenges of skepticism.²⁵⁹ It comes out in our unhappiness with dogmatism. In relation to this I will discuss Hegel, in the next chapter, as demanding that philosophy be free of anything

With this, the Phenomenology of Spirit is concluded (PhG, §37).

259. It is interesting to note how some philosophers seem to be highly sensitive to skeptical challenges and others quite unconcerned with them. I would suggest that the former are those who are moved by a deep sense of our freedom.

that is pre-philosophical. We can think of this as the demand that philosophy not simply be the careful and thorough (at worst merely clever and ingenious) rationalization of beliefs held on some grounds that have not been questioned by philosophy itself (i.e. the demand that philosophy not be simply the handmaiden to arbitrary belief). The demand for concreteness appears, at least negatively, in the dissatisfaction with any partial or one-sided understanding, and particularly with any possibly erroneous partial or one-sided 'understanding.' (At least as a regulative ideal, many of us want the truth and the whole truth of that which interests us).²⁶⁰

In connection with this last point it is important, if we are to understand Hegel, to distinguish his demand for concreteness (or lack of abstractness) with some contemporary views which respond to the same demand (or at a minimum present us with the idea that the content of thought is not abstract). Superficially Hegel can seem to be talking in a way that is consistent with some form of content externalism.²⁶¹ For example, he is critical of the content of ideas being thought of as 'merely in the head,' he speaks of content as 'objective' and with these there is a strong sense of what could be called 'anti-individualism' (following Tyler Burge) in his view, and more generally of anti-dualism and anti-representationalism.²⁶² I think we can sketch what

260. At the most general level, one could think of Hegel's view of the development of culture as successive generations looking back and saying 'you thought you grasped what human freedom was, but you were only clinging to an abstraction,' in comparison to what that generation takes to be the fuller, more concrete truth of freedom.

261. My comments in what follows are not intended to do justice to the large variety of externalist views in the philosophy of mind. My intention is only to say enough to distinguish Hegel's view from externalism generally.

262. I am not suggesting that Hegel is a metaphysical dualist (in the sense in which this term is

would be Hegel's response to content externalism and a causal theory of reference.²⁶³

Externalism 'exports' content out of the mind and into the world. The mind is treated like any other natural object in the world (though a complicated one *qua* biological machine). Like all such natural objects, it has causal relations with other objects, and these are at the basis of what knowing is (the question 'does he know X?' becomes the question 'is he in the right causal relation to X?'). The situation is no different in kind (though it is in complexity) between humans and other animals. A certain chattering of a squirrel refers (successfully) to the presence of a predator if a particular causal relation between the predator and the squirrel obtains, and the meaning of the chattering just is that presence of the predator. In this the squirrel and the predator are, and remain, external to one another (it would be hard to comprehend what it would mean for them not to). This mutual externality is what Hegel sees as the mark of the finite. He contrasts this with thinking, which he presents as overgrasping its other. To be clear, we might have to say here that 'thinking as it really is' overgrasps its other, because Hegel does think that our thinking *can be* external - when it fails to overgrasp the other (when it is a mere opinion about something which is opposed to it). Hegel's idea is that as long as externality prevails, we do not have (true) knowledge. We may picture our knowing as like the case of the squirrel, but

generally used, i.e. as assuming ultimately two kinds of substance in reality), but I *am* suggesting that Hegel does not accept the picture given by externalism as a possible way of not being a dualist. As noted earlier, Hegel takes us to find a *dialectical* unity between thinking and being (hence a unity which must remain a mystery to the 'understanding').

263. For the general picture of externalism as a theory of mind and language, I am thinking of such works as Saul Kripke, *Naming and Necessity* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1980) and Hilary Putnam, "The Meaning of Meaning," in *Philosophical Papers, Vol. II: Mind, Language, and Reality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 215-271.

to know this to be truly the case, we would have to be on both sides (of cause and effect, predator and chattering) and so know them as truly related, we could not simply be one side of a causal relation (any thought of a relation is the thought of a relation that is within thought itself).²⁶⁴ If this is true, then trying to think externalism (affirming that we know it to be true) would be, from Hegel's perspective, self-defeating.²⁶⁵ The contrast between externalism and Hegel's view is in fact quite marked: in externalism the content turns out just to be the referent; in Hegel's view the referent turns out to be nothing other than the content (in true, or absolute knowing, that is, in the concrete thinking which is the system).

Misunderstanding can also arise from Hegel's talk of thinking as 'universal' and of thinking as 'of the substantial' (or just itself what is 'substantial').²⁶⁶ Universality can lead one to think of abstraction, not concreteness, and 'the substantial' can seem like one of those slippery Hegelian terms that one is only ever on the verge of grasping, or if not, it can seem to be in tension with universality. In what follows I will discuss how I interpret these as coming together, starting with a discussion of 'substantiality' and making my way back to 'universality.' What does

264. On this idea cf. the introduction to the *Phenomenology*. If Hegel is right, this explains why externalism is a view that is easier to picture in terms of non-human animals - in this case it does not appear problematic that we are on both sides of the relation, squirrel and predator (we have a kind of God's-eye perspective, one not caught in the mutual externality of the finite).

265. This is similar to Descartes' argument that reason cannot doubt itself without affirming itself, it can try to doubt itself, but the attempt defeats itself. For Hegel, to re-construct thinking in terms of finite things in a causal order is to (try to) think the denial of thinking.

266. Cf. EL, §§19-25 for the use of 'universality' and EL, §24 A1 for the use of 'substantiality.'

Hegel mean by 'substantial?' Here is an example of where we can read Hegel more literally than at first seems possible. One might disagree with Hegel over *what counts* as substantial, but one can at least understand that one *is* disagreeing (and *about what* one is disagreeing). To explain: for the non-philosophical materialist, what is substantial will be what she can feel and bump into. For the philosophical materialist, the substantial might be sub-atomic particles (or perhaps be thought of in terms of a physicalist monism) and universal laws of matter/energy (if she is of a realist bent). In other words, what is 'substantial' will answer to the question: 'what is really here?' For Hegel this will always be answered with reference to activity (because in his metaphysics what is actual is *activity* - and this means the question 'what is really here?' is equally the question 'what is really going on here?').²⁶⁷ In activity, what is substantial is the end, understood as 1) moving principle (i.e. present from the beginning and throughout) and 2) what is realized in and through the activity (so a result).²⁶⁸ To take a very ordinary example, for Hegel

267. In this Hegel is taking up and transforming the conceptions of substance as found in Aristotle and Spinoza. It might seem to be obscuring the issue for me to be speaking of 'the substantial' and asking what Hegel means by it, rather than asking this of 'substance.' There are two reasons for my approach: first, Hegel's use of 'substantial' is more difficult to figure out than his use of 'substance' and second, Hegel himself often uses 'substantial' when we might expect him simply to speak of 'substance.' He does this, as I interpret him, because what substance is for him is activity (in Hegel, substance is complete, fully self-determined activity). When we speak of 'substance' (as also when we speak of 'subject') there is a lingering connotation of reference to a thing, and it is this which Hegel wishes to avoid. Hence he often speaks of 'substantial'/'substantiality' and 'subjectivity' because these are tied to activity - to that which *is* substantial or that which *is* a subject, though of course he does not avoid speaking of 'substance' and 'subject.'

268. Though this is not a 'result' in the sense of a product that can be separated from the activity of producing it (as a pair of shoes can from the process of making them). Examples of the appropriate kind of 'result' would be God's knowing of Himself, the dance or musical composition which is what it is through the diversity and unity of its moments, and the life

what is going on in a handshake - what is substantial - is mutual recognition and respect. Now that mutual recognition and respect could not *be* without the fleeting and external movements of body-parts, nevertheless these are not what is 'substantial.' (The mutual recognition and respect is at once what produces the external movements and is what is actualized in and through them). At the most basic metaphysical level, if my interpretation is correct, what is substantial is the divine activity (understood schematically as a going out and return to itself in and through art, religion, and philosophy). I would suggest that 'ethical life' for Hegel is the turning point in this movement, though speaking in this way is not meant to separate art, religion, and philosophy from that ethical life.²⁶⁹ This, however, must remain as a suggestion here. What is 'substantial' in the thought of a particular philosopher is that divine activity.²⁷⁰ So too with art - which is why there can be 'bad' art - art can fail to live up to its concept, (i.e. what it is really trying to be). What is substantial in an ethical community is freedom. What is substantial in marriage is freedom in the form of love. Wherever we can understand a relation of ground and appearance (even accepting that one cannot be without the other), what Hegel will refer to as 'substantial' is the ground. But it is more accurate to think of the substantial as the end of an activity (than to think in terms of ground). This is why Hegel is lead to speak of 'the substantial' as the 'content' of something, (where that 'something' is actual), it is what something *means*. If we dismiss the inner teleology of Hegel's view, then this will not make sense (or at most seem to be an

of an oak tree, taken as one (complete) life.

269. For the relation of ethical life and religion see the extended remark of PR, §270.

270. Everything else is 'insubstantial' and so left out of Hegel's LHP (only the 'development of the Idea' is presented).

imposition, a fraudulent anthropomorphism), for we will think of meaning as something subjective *as opposed to* objective.²⁷¹ If, as I am claiming, for Hegel, the substantial is the end realized in and through activity, then the substantial will also be 'the self-identical': Hegel often puts this in terms of saying that it is 'what is adequate to itself'.²⁷² What is merely finite is never this. God, understood in Aristotelian terms as an (more accurately, 'the') infinite, free, complete activity, is paradigmatic of this 'substantiality' and 'self-identity' (and 'adequacy-to-self'). Hegel's view of God as incarnate (as discussed earlier, this is more accurate than 'immanent') means that humans are never merely finite. Speaking Platonically we might say that humans partake of the divine activity and that this is their freedom. But Hegel would object that in speaking this way we have separated the human from the divine too radically. We might alternately say that where humans are free the divine is present. This is what Hegel thinks separates the ancient and modern world: in the ancient world, only God is truly free, in the modern world the individual is free: "The right of the subject's *particularity* to find satisfaction, or - to put it differently - the right of *subjective freedom*, is the pivotal and focal point in the difference between *antiquity* and the *modern age*. This right, in its infinity, is expressed in Christianity, and it has become the

271. The externalist philosopher of mind might object, but see above on how Hegel cannot be an externalist.

272. Cf. EL, §18: "the Idea shows itself as the thinking that is strictly identical with itself, and this at once shows itself be the activity of positing itself over against itself, in order to be for-itself, and to be, in this other, only at home with itself" and PhG, §803: "the 'I' is not merely the Self, but the *identity of the Self with itself*; but this identity is complete and immediate oneness with Self, or *this Subject* is just as much *Substance*." On the substantial being adequate to itself, cf. PhG, §37 on absolute knowing, in which "Spirit has made its existence identical with its essence" and EL, §24 A2: "In the philosophical sense ... 'truth,' expressed abstractly and in general, means the agreement of a content with itself."

universal and actual principle of a new form of the world."²⁷³

The complex of Hegelian terms (which I am arguing are not, in the end, 'Hegelian' in the sense of being idiosyncratic technical terms) which includes 'actuality,' 'substantiality,' 'self-identity' and 'immediacy' are easily misunderstood if we lose sight of either of two things: 1) the category of activity (and understanding that this demands an inner teleology) as ontologically basic, and 2) the centrality of Hegel's claim (he would say insight or discovery) that there is a unity of the infinite and the finite. Keeping these two points in mind we can make sense of Hegel's claim, for instance, that a single, isolated thought is not self-identical (this is what Hegel thinks we discover in the course of the *Logic* as we try to have a true thought). Rather, the whole movement of thought is what is self-identical (as the whole movement in a dance is what is self-identical, not any one of its moments).²⁷⁴ So too, we can make sense of Hegel's claim that self-identity is something achieved - here especially, it would seem, Hegel's use of the term could not be further from that of ordinary usage (or as used in formal logic, where self-identity is trivial).

273. PR, §124 R. Hegel distinguishes between what he takes to be the more limited freedom of the oriental world from that of the Greek world, but this does not vitiate the point made above.

274. It is difficult to avoid speaking of a 'single isolated thought,' though Hegel would argue that there really is no such thing - thought *is* dialectical, it really *is* the movement of the whole. It would be truer to his position to say that we *try* to have a single isolated thought, but find that we cannot (this is not to deny determinacy in thought, but to claim that in determining each category of the *Logic*, for instance, we are moved to determine another, or in the PR, to say that in determining morality we are necessarily led to 'ethical life'). Hence a typical comment of Hegel's: "The insight that the very nature of thinking is the dialectic, that, as understanding, it must fall into the negative of itself, into contradictions, is an aspect of capital importance in the *Logic*" (EL, §11 R).

Hegelian self-identity is nontrivial, indeed, we would have to say it is the *most* non-trivial idea for Hegel: the simple answer to the question, 'what is self-identical?' is God, *qua* infinitely self-determined. Yet even here the meaning of the Hegelian term is, in an important sense, the *same* in the end - what is different is the metaphysical view: only God is fully self-identical, just as for Hegel only God is immediate (Hegel makes the latter point in speaking of the immediacy of the system - but note that we must understand by 'system,' not a theory, but rather the divine activity itself).²⁷⁵ The difference is not one of the meaning of 'self-identical' or 'immediate,' it is the difference in what is viewed as ultimate ontologically (and with this, what is, in fact, truly *one* - and so capable of being identical to itself). To interpret Hegel's famous (infamous?) sentence from the Preface to the *Phenomenology*, "In my view, which can be justified only by the exposition of the system itself, everything turns on grasping and expressing the True, not only as *Substance*, but equally as *Subject*,"²⁷⁶ it is not that this truth is a substance which is subject, or that as substance it is also subject, it is that it is subject *which makes itself* substance (subject is

275. On the self-mediated immediacy of the truth see EL, §213 A and PhG, §18. The latter text also introduces the idea of the truth as achieving its end, an end which has been present from the beginning: "the living Substance is being which is in truth *Subject*, or, what is the same, is in truth actual only in so far as it is the movement of positing itself, or is the mediation of its self-othering with itself. ... It is the process of its own becoming, the circle that presupposes its end as its goal, having its end also as its beginning; and only by being worked out to its end, is it actual."

276. PhG, §17.

the activity of making itself).²⁷⁷ Substance is a result.²⁷⁸ That result is the end realized, and so it is the *content*, the *meaning* (or *meaningfulness*), of the activity. It is for this reason that Hegel can often sound as though he is confusing meaning and referent - because the referent ultimately *is* the meaning. This content or meaning is what Hegel refers to as universal.²⁷⁹ When we have thought that meaning, with no referent as something beyond it, we have thought 'concretely.'²⁸⁰

277. Cf. PR, §124: "What the subject *is*, *is the series of its actions*. If these are a series of worthless productions, then the subjectivity of volition is likewise worthless; and conversely, if the series of the individual's deeds are of a substantial nature, then so also is his inner will." (Note that the deeds of each *exist*, but only are substantial in the latter. This is a typical use of the term by Hegel and, one should add, also in ordinary conversation).

278. Hence Hegel will speak of spirit in the following manner:

Spirit is the knowledge of oneself in the externalization of oneself; the being that is the movement of retaining its self-identity in its otherness. This, however, is Substance, in so far as Substance is, in its accidents, at the same time reflected into itself, not indifferent to them as to something unessential or present in them as in an alien element, but in them it is within itself, i.e. in so far as it is Subject or Self (PhG, §759).

279. The prime example of this is freedom. In my final chapter I will turn to Hegel's discussion of the free will in PR (see in particular PR, §5-7). There we will see that Hegel takes my freedom not to be this or that particular action (this or that particular determination of my will), and yet that very freedom is actualized in and through my particular actions (including those that constitute my engagement in institutions). Without them, my freedom would be abstract, non-actual. In this context Hegel speaks of my freedom as universal and as substantial: the free will is "*particularity reflected into itself* and thereby restored to *universality*. ... This is the *freedom* of the will, which constitutes the concept or substantiality of the will" (§7). The free will is said to 'return to its universality.' I take it that this means that the particular determinations of my will *mean* something. That meaning is called universal because it is not caught up in and limited by the externality of the actions or the particularity of the determinations of the will. It is the end which produces them and to which they return. That whole activity is substance. Freedom actualized is both substance and concrete universal.

280. Thus, "genuine thought is not an opinion about something [*die Sache*], but the concept of the thing [*Sache*] itself" (PR, Preface, Addition to p.13).

In contrast, in 'representational thinking' (necessarily abstract for Hegel) the distinction between meaning and referent remains indispensable.

From the perspective of the Concept, the two demands that thinking be free and that thinking be concrete will turn out (if Hegel is right) to be mutually entailing. In theological terms, God's knowing of His going and out and return to self will be fully concrete, for in knowing the other He knows nothing but himself (He is thought thinking thought where abstraction has no place), but this is for that thinking to be free - it is free because not mediated by something other than itself. However, from the perspective of one who is outside the system, the two demands will be seen as conflicting, at least if for thinking to be free is for it to be presuppositionless (and Hegel presents it in this way).²⁸¹ This conflict explains why the relation of the *Phenomenology* to the *Encyclopedia* is a matter of scholarly debate, and admittedly ambiguous in Hegel's own discussion. Is the *Phenomenology* necessary as introduction to the *Encyclopedia*? Is it not introductory, but part of the *Encyclopedia* (or both)? We might answer such questions with reference to changes in Hegel's plan or a lack of coherence between these

281. This is what creates the problem of with what 'science' must begin: see "With What Must The Science Begin?" in WL, 67-78. Cf. also EL, §78: "All ... presuppositions or assumptions must equally be given up when we enter into the Science, whether they are taken from representation or from thinking; for it is this Science, in which all determinations of this sort must first be investigated, and for which their meaning and validity like that of their antitheses must be [re]cognised." Ultimately, from the perspective of the Concept, freedom will have to be understood as self-determination, and the system, as self-determined, will be presuppositionless (or better, the whole question of presuppositions will no longer be relevant). But in the above I am assuming we do not have access to this perspective.

works, contrary to Hegel's intention. However, if I am correct about the two demands that Hegel's conception of philosophy produces (or, equally, is a response to), then this ambiguity is inevitable. If we take the demand that thinking be concrete, the *Phenomenology* will be a necessary introduction to the *Encyclopedia* (and a first step in the science) because it is to be the argument that gets us to the point of discovering the certainty that reason (which is *our reason* and *reason itself*) is all reality. But that is just to demand a fully concrete thinking, that is, a thinking in which thought actually *knows* itself as all reality. (The *certainty* that it is all reality has within it the demand that it then *know* itself as this.) One will then turn to Hegel's logic with the understanding that from the start there is a demand for a fully concrete thought, and this will drive the dialectic (as its internal telos): that is, the logic will be seen as the attempt to think the actual (not just have an abstract thought about it - and thought will be restless while it remains yet abstract). The determination 'being' can be understood as the first attempt at this thought which is to grasp all reality. But what we find is that while it does *refer* to all reality by being the most abstract term, in this very abstractness it fails to grasp it. The failure is so complete that, Hegel argues, we cannot really differentiate being from nothing (the abstractness is at the limit of being contentless). If we accepted the abstractness of 'being' we would not be motivated to push on. But if we demand a fully concrete thinking, then we will see the category of 'being' as *inadequate* to what it would be and so persevere in the course of the *Logic*.²⁸² On the other hand,

282. This demand is what Charles Taylor would call a criterial property. Cf. C. Taylor, *Hegel* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1975), ch. 9, especially 229. What Taylor rightly is pointing out is that the dialectic has a teleological structure, though laying down a criterial property as motivating the dialectic must be or appear arbitrary, unless in the end we can look back and see that dialectic as the truth thinking itself. That is, if the teleology

if we begin with the demand that thinking be free, then we will concentrate on philosophy being presuppositionless. Then the *Phenomenology* will not be a necessary introduction or first step in (Hegelian) science. This is how an interpreter like Stephen Houlgate approaches Hegel's *Logic*.²⁸³ One then begins the *Logic*, not with a demand to think the actual in a fully concrete manner, but simply to think without presupposition, and see what happens.²⁸⁴ One might, quite reasonably, think that would be a hopeless starting point - what if we just draw a blank, or have random thoughts? Hegel cannot prove to us that this will not happen, but his claim is that in retrospect we will know that thinking itself is dialectical and in the *Logic* we have only been 'looking on' at this (where the sense of 'only' is that the movement has not been merely our subjective musings, but rather, our thinking has revealed to us an objectivity within it). This famous suggestion of Hegel's (that the philosopher on 'looks on,' made by Hegel in reference to the dialectic of the *Phenomenology* and used by me in reference to the *Logic*) can easily be misunderstood: for Hegel, there is no thinking without our human thinking, so what could we be looking on at? It is not enough simply to answer that we are looking on at the development (idealized or not) of thinking in history. More importantly, it is a looking on at the objective dialectic as found in our *own* thinking. A parallel with Descartes might be helpful: supposing the

is truly internal, that could only be known in retrospect.

283. See Stephen Houlgate, *The Opening of Hegel's Logic* (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 2006), 29-53 and *An Introduction to Hegel: Freedom, Truth and History* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), 26-47.

284. In *The Opening of Hegel's Logic* Houlgate argues that Hegel cannot even presume the rules of formal inference in his quest for a presuppositionless thinking, since they presume categories already (30).

result of Descartes' ontological argument of *Meditation 5* to be that we cannot but think God exists, we could say, in a Hegelian sense, that in finding this we have merely looked on at this discovery within our thought. Hegel speaks of this as submitting one's thinking "to the logical necessity of the Concept."²⁸⁵ There is a more general parallel between finding the possibility of finding thought to be dialectical in the *Logic* and Descartes' work: in the course of the *Meditations* we are driven inward to our own thinking activity. We might worry that this would lead to a solipsism, but Descartes' argument is that within this subjectivity we find truth, so that the subjective and objective are, in the end, found not to be opposed. The entire world is, in a sense, re-created in our thinking of it (in six days, no less, with a rest on the seventh). We could not have known, in *Meditation 1*, that this would happen. We might have been left with the thin freedom of the skeptic who refuses assent and so is not imprisoned by belief in the false. But if we make the discoveries that Descartes thinks we will, then we could look back and realize that our subjective thinking was, all along, never *merely* subjective.

II.4 Hegel's Alternative Introduction to the System

If we wish an adequate introduction to the 'system,' Hegel offers us the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. This is meant to give us an introduction 'from the inside,' which is to say that in it Hegel thinks we will 'look on' (or discover) that thinking is dialectical and that, as dialectical, it

285. EL, 1827 Preface, p.16.

is (infinite) reason which is certain that it is all reality.²⁸⁶ The relation of the *Phenomenology* to the *Encyclopedia* (and so also to Hegel's various lecture series, because they are nothing but the further explication of the *Encyclopedia*) is in one sense similar to the relation of Thomas' first two questions in the *Summa Theologiae* to the remaining questions in that massive and systematic work. These first two questions address the nature of theology and the existence of God. From the perspective of their answers, in the following questions, we are then in a position to reflect on the nature of God, His creation, man's place in it, and the redeeming work of God (on the most general level, to reflect on God, what is other than God and its relation to Him). Similarly, the *Phenomenology* ends with the perspective of absolute knowing (or speculative philosophy) from which a recollection of the content of the 'system' (which is what the *Encyclopedia* attempts to be) can be undertaken.²⁸⁷

However, Hegel gives an alternative introduction to the 'system' in the *Encyclopedia Logic*, at least as I read the opening sections: the Prefaces of 1817 and 1827, the Foreword of 1830, the 'Introduction' (§§1-17) 'Preliminary Conception' (§§19-78) and 'More Precise Conception and Division of the Logic' (§§79-83).²⁸⁸ This introduction (all of the above, not just §§1-17) is extremely dense and, I think, nearly impossible to make sense of without

286. Hence Hegel speaks of reality as dialectical no less than thought.

287. That introduction unifies Thomas' first two questions, for the thinking that is discovered in the *Phenomenology*, so Hegel claims, is the infinite reason which is the truth of the world.

288. Harris et al. include this last section (§§79-83) within the 'Preliminary Conception.' The headings in the German text leave it ambiguous whether this is its own section or not.

understanding Hegel's transformation of the Platonic project and the resulting theological dimension in his thought. The text is so dense that any synopsis would be misleading, but I will briefly in what follows give some highlights of what Hegel claims on behalf of philosophy in order to get across the nature of this alternative introduction to true philosophy (speculative argument which just is speculative thinking in its systematicity). Philosophy is presented as the free and concrete thinking which is the self-development of the Concept.²⁸⁹ That self-development is said to reveal that faith and enlightenment are not ultimately opposed (that philosophy is the unity of the content of faith and the freedom of thinking).²⁹⁰ Notwithstanding the above, the 'Introduction' presents philosophy (or 'science') as presuppositionless, though we will only understand this when it is complete,²⁹¹ and it presents this science as having the purpose of reconciling "the reason that is conscious of itself with the reason that *is*, or actuality, through the cognition of this accord [the accord of philosophy with actuality and experience]."²⁹² Contrary to the hypothetical philosophizing of a Rheinhold (i.e. of anyone who takes such an approach to philosophy as Rheinhold), philosophy must be systematic²⁹³ and consequently there is only one philosophy.²⁹⁴ This one philosophy begins within experience (and stays within experience), but 'experience' is not to be conflated with sense-experience, and philosophy's

289. EL, 1827 Preface, pp. 4-17.

290. EL, 1830 Foreword, pp. 18-23.

291. EL, §1.

292. EL, §6.

293. EL, §10 R, with EL, §14 R: "A content has its justification only as a moment of the whole, outside of which it is only an unfounded presupposition or a subjective certainty."

294. EL, § 12 R.

beginning is not to be thought of as an initial premise upon which all else follows, rather philosophy is the rise in thought to a thinking (to a "higher cognition" [*höhere Erkenntnis*]²⁹⁵) of what is universal and prior:

philosophy does owe its development to the empirical sciences, but it gives to their content the fully essential shape of the *freedom* of thinking (or of what is a priori) as well as the *validation of necessity* (instead of the content being warranted because it is simply found to be present, and because it is a fact of experience). In its necessity the fact becomes the presentation and imitation of the activity of thinking that is original and completely independent.²⁹⁶

We never go beyond experience, but what is experience? The whole content of thought is experienced. We could speak of philosophy as the *experience* of the system.²⁹⁷ Hegel takes this experience at once to be a grasping of the truth and (what is perhaps the most obscure and difficult notion of all) to be simultaneously the self-actualization of the truth: "It is only in thinking, and as thinking, that this content, God himself, is in its truth. In this sense, therefore, thought is not just *mere* thought; on the contrary, it is what is highest and, considered strictly, it is the one and only way in which what is eternal, and what is in and for itself can be grasped."²⁹⁸

295. EL, 1817 Preface, p.2.

296. EL, §12 R.

297. The subjectivity and demand for freedom (we could say simply, the subjective freedom) that Hegel sees as coming into its own through the reformation (and with this the early modern period) brings out the demand that this be *my* experience: "The principle of *experience* contains the infinitely important determination that, for a content to be accepted and held to be true, man must himself *be* actively involved *with it*, more precisely, that he must find any such content to be at one and in unity with *the certainty of his own self*" (EL, §7 R).

298. EL, §19 A2.

The transformation which is philosophy produces "Free and genuine thought" which "is inwardly *concrete*; hence it is *Idea*, and in all its universality it is *the Idea* or *the Absolute*."²⁹⁹ That Idea "shows itself as the thinking that is strictly identical with itself, and this at once shows itself to be the activity of positing itself over against itself, in order to be for-itself, and to be, in this other, only at home with itself."³⁰⁰ The first moment of the system, logic, is the science of thinking in the 'element' of thinking.³⁰¹ Thinking contains what is "*essential, inner, true*."³⁰² Thinking changes the way a content is first in our experience.³⁰³ This thinking is the universal producing itself, it is equally *my* activity.³⁰⁴ And the universal produced is truth, hence logic is metaphysics.³⁰⁵ This entire presentation is given as a bold (dogmatic) claim (I use the singular because the various claims are presented as gathering themselves together into one system, and so form one complex claim). The presentation is, as a whole, a picture, not an argument (though there are 'arguments' within it).³⁰⁶ Indeed it is both dogmatic and argumentative, the two limitations which Hegel wishes to bring out as endemic in any philosophy of the understanding. In Hegel's view we must distinguish between isolated 'arguments' which merely connect a set of

299. EL, §14.

300. EL, §18.

301. EL, §20.

302. EL, §21.

303. EL, §22.

304. EL, §23, also §23 R: "Thinking immediately involves *freedom*, because it is the activity of the universal." The "I" that is this activity of philosophical thinking is "*freed from all particularity*."

305. EL, §24.

306. In the quick survey of Hegel's presentation I have not brought out the argumentative sections within it, only the basic claims made within the one claim of truth as system.

premises with a conclusion and 'true' argument, which can be nothing less than the system. The former Hegel speaks of as 'argumentative' thinking (I will return to this in the next chapter). We could re-phrase Hegel's point in language he does not use as follows: in his view there are many *valid* arguments, indeed *far too many* - or, more precisely, an indefinite number (he comments that the rationalists of early modern philosophy have shown us that a valid argument can be found for *anything*) - but the only *sound* argument would be the system (and since in the end soundness is what counts, there is only *one* argument).³⁰⁷

I claimed above that we are in a better position to grasp the meaning of Hegel's alternative introduction to the 'system' given in the *Encyclopedia Logic* when we think of Hegel as taking on and transforming the Platonic project of rising in philosophy to a science of the Good, with the resultant theological dimension in Hegel's conception of philosophy (in terms of both content and method). It might be thought that Hegel himself gives us reason to suspect this claim, for immediately after the presentation which I sketched in outline above, Hegel turns to a consideration of positions from early modern philosophy up to his own day, and he introduces this treatment as follows: "As a further introduction, we now ought to consider the *positions*

307. The point about ratiocination being able to prove anything is made by Hegel when he is bringing out what is insightful in the empiricists in distinction from the rationalists (EL, §37). Hegel argues that the thinking of the empiricists is tied down (in a way that the thinking of the rationalists is not). It is tied down by their determination to begin from the actual. This determination Hegel applauds (because it avoids indefinite ratiocination, that is, the indefinite finding of reasons for anything). But the empiricists achieve this at the expense of being dogmatic, because they mistake the actual for the given (and specifically the sensuous given).

[available] to thinking with respect to objectivity, in order to clarify the meaning of the Logic and to lead into the standpoint that is here given to it."³⁰⁸ What does the talk of 'objectivity' mean and why a focus on the early moderns? We can best understand this section in relation to a question I raised in chapter one about whether the Platonic inward turn is or could be productive. I said then that the skeptic would remain unconvinced. Hegel too can be thought of as presenting us with an inward turn: thinking as active and free produces out of itself the universal which is the truth, though this inward turn does not involve a turn away from the outer world, but rather a transformation of the content of experience.³⁰⁹ This is 'inward' in that it rises to the universal which is not caught in the mutual externality of the finite (if I am correct, then this turn is in fact a 'return'). Hegel thinks that Hume is right to be skeptical about starting from particulars and inferring universality and necessity.³¹⁰ But Hegel's surprising response is that Hume's insight into induction is not an insight into the limitation of human knowledge simpliciter, for what happens in philosophy is that the universal returns to itself out of the particular. This is only possible as a return, not an inference. If we are to be able to understand this, that understanding will involve grasping thinking as not merely subjective but objective as well:

308. EL, §25. Square brackets are my addition (the text within them is the translation of T. F. Geraets). One might understand from Geraets' translation that these are the *logical* positions available to thinking, but the context makes it clear that these are the positions we find (empirically) to have been held in early modern philosophy. The German text is as follows: "*Die dem Denken zur Objektivität gegebenen Stellungen sollen als nähere Einleitung, um die Bedeutung und den Standpunkt, welcher hier der Logik gegeben ist, zu erläutern und herbeizuführen, nun betrachtet werden.*"

309. As above, see EL, §§20-22.

310. Cf. EL, §39 and R.

the Logical is to be sought in a system of thought-determinations in which the antithesis between subjective and objective (in its usual meaning) disappears. This meaning of thinking and of its determinations is more precisely expressed by the Ancients when they say that *nous* governs the world, or by our own saying that there is reason in the world, by which we mean that reason is the soul of the world, inhabits it, and is immanent in it, as its own innermost nature, its universal.³¹¹

The reason Hegel focuses on the early modern period is pedagogical, rather than logical: it is meant to help us be able to appreciate the introduction to philosophy he has given. That introduction is closely tied to ancient *theoria* (or science of the Good), but (as I am interpreting Hegel) the overall movement of the philosophical positions of the early modern period are likely to have made it difficult for us to appreciate and incorporate what is right in the ancient position.³¹² In the early modern period we find a focus on epistemology, which we could speak of as an inward turn resulting in the question whether our subjective thinking can be known to have a relation to the truth, where truth is taken as what is objective in contrast to the subjective. The early modern period produces a stark divide between subject and object, and the question is whether they can be brought back together again. This is why Hegel's interest is in 'considering

311. EL, §24 A1.

312. I say 'overall movement' because it is the course of early modern philosophy taken as a whole that is likely to leave us skeptical. If we are happy with rationalism, for instance, then Hegel will take us to be right about thought's power to grasp the truth, but he will think that we hold this as a naive assumption and that we still do not see the form in which thought grasps the truth (see EL, §26). If we are happy with empiricism, Hegel will take us to be right about the need for our thought to be tied down by the actual, but he will think that we have a naive view of what the actual is (see §§37-39).

the positions with respect to objectivity.' Hegel is concerned to bring out the insights that each position has: rationalists, empiricists, Kant and finally the fideist revolt (of which Jacobi is an expositor) against the former positions (all of these, even the fideist, are taken by Hegel to be philosophies of the 'understanding').³¹³ At the same time his intent is to bring out what holds them back from the transformation of thinking that would result in speculative philosophy and so holds them back from appreciating what is true in ancient philosophy and the possibility of seeing the unity of that ancient view and the modern insight into subjectivity and freedom.³¹⁴ If we, through this account, are receptive to Hegel's criticism of these early modern positions with respect to their attempts to understand the relation of our thinking to the truth, then we will be at least curious about his speculative alternative and its claim that, in some sense, reason is all reality. This section of Hegel's text is very rich. It deserves a full commentary, but for my purposes, I am going to focus on one discussion in it concerning the rationalist's and their proofs of the existence of God. My concern will not be with whether Hegel is fair in his assessment of the rationalists, but what we learn about Hegel's view based on his criticism. It is interesting that Hegel does not criticize them for trying to prove the existence of God, for having an illegitimate object of inquiry, but rather for the manner in which they proceed - for what they take to be proper philosophical method. In the course of this criticism he suggests that what he takes to be their failure nevertheless is evidence of something that *is* true, namely, that if we think at all we

313. See EL, §§26-78.

314. What holds the rationalists back is more subtle than the other positions, it is their naivete (so Hegel thinks) that the fixed categories of the understanding are capable of grasping the truth.

are already engaged in a return to the universal as true, we are always already rising to the perspective of absolute knowing. The *Phenomenology* can be understood as his extended argument that this is in fact the case, here in the *Encyclopedia Logic*, as with his presentation generally (in what I am calling his alternate introduction to the system) it is offered by Hegel as an idea to be followed up or not.

When writing about Hegel's language, Chong-Fuk Lau discusses Heidegger (and contemporary philosophy generally) as following Kant's lead with respect to the limits of reason, seeing thinking as already the mark of finitude.³¹⁵ It is important to note that for Hegel the opposite is the case: we might say in contrast that thinking is the mark of infinitude. In this Hegel is Platonic and Augustinian. The prisoners of the Platonic cave, in the consciousness of their imprisonment, are already rising out of the cave. For Augustine, the rational reflection on the content of faith leads to a knowledge (a properly philosophical knowledge) of ourselves as *imago Dei*.³¹⁶ During the course of the alternate introduction to the system given in the

315. Chong-Fuk Lau, "Language and Metaphysics: the Dialectics of Hegel's Speculative Proposition," in *Hegel and Language*, ed. Jere O'Neill Surber (Albany: State Univ. of New York press, 2006), 56.

316. For an explication of Augustine's argument see R. D. Crouse, "St. Augustine's *De Trinitate*: Philosophical Method," in E. A. Livingstone, ed., *Studia Patristica* XVI (1985): 501-510:

St. Augustine's claim is that the self-conscious life of the mind presupposes as its centre and ground the illumination of a principle of absolute self-consciousness, in which *memoria*, *intellectus*, and *voluntas* are perfectly united without confusion. The concept of the Trinitarian principle, declared *foris* in the revealed word, is authenticated *intus* as the mind on its inward journey discovers itself as

Encyclopedia Logic, Hegel returns repeatedly to the idea that if we are thinking at all we are already on the journey that is a return to infinite thinking. Here is the most extended comment he gives:

Since man is a thinking being, neither sound common sense nor philosophy will ever give up rising itself *out of* the empirical worldview to God. This elevation has the *thinking* consideration of the world as its only foundation, not the merely sensory one that we have in common with the animals. It is for thinking, and for thinking *alone*, that the *essence*, the *substance*, the *universal might*, and *purposive determination* of the world are [present]. The so-called proofs that God is there [exists] have to be seen simply as the *descriptions* and analyses of the inward *journey of the spirit*. It is a *thinking* journey and it thinks what is sensory. The *elevation* of thinking above the sensible, its *going out* above the finite to the infinite, the *leap* that is made into the supersensible when the sequences of the sensible are broken off, all this is thinking itself; this transition is *only thinking*. To say that this passage ought not to take place means that there is to be no thinking. And in fact, animals do not make this transition; *they* stay with sense-experience and intuition; for that reason they do not have any religion either.³¹⁷

Of those who embrace thinking as understood above, Hegel says: "If, as Aristotle says, *theoria* is the most *blessed*, and among goods the *best*, then those who participate in this gratification know what they have in it: the satisfaction of the necessity of their spiritual nature."³¹⁸

image, presupposing that principle. And the conclusion is indubitable in the sense that a denial of the Principle would imply a denial of the actuality of the self as self-conscious *imago* (510).

317. EL, §50 R. Cf. PhG, §32 on this 'elevation' as freeing us from the sensible and (in the modern world even more importantly) freeing us from the fixity of thought-determinations.

318. EL, 1830 Foreword, p. 22.

What I wish to bring out in Hegel's criticism of the rationalists' proofs of the existence of God is its dialectical nature: He criticizes their assumption that the form of the proposition is the basic unit of thought's content and the resulting assumption that offering syllogisms is the fundamental method of philosophizing. This is not to dismiss either of these as important to philosophy: as I will discuss in my next chapter, both are to be used *within* Hegel's speculative philosophy, but are not to be taken as the most fundamental structure of philosophical expression or argument. However, the more basic dialectical point Hegel wishes to make is that even in this (he thinks, inadequate) form of thinking we find the demand to be more than what it is. We might say that Kant finds in this a tragic story - we cannot help wanting more but we can't get it. Hegel thinks he overcomes Kant's tragic ending through the argument of the *Phenomenology*. The first step in that dialectic is his answer to Hume, but the entire work is needed for his answer to Kant (which could be thought of as Hegel's attempt to unite the noumenal and phenomenal).³¹⁹

319. The first arguments of the *Phenomenology* are only indirectly aimed at Hume (since they are not aimed at any sophisticated philosophical position): they are intended to reveal our discovery that in experience we never begin with pure particulars, that thought already has universality in it from the very beginning (contra Hume's anatomy of the mind's contents). If this is right, then the first shape of consciousness considered ('looked on' at) in the PhG (which thinks it grasps the truth with what it takes to be its grasp of the pure particular) is in an important sense not a shape of *consciousness* at all - that is, *if* it obtained at all, it would be preconscious (and thinking that would be a sophisticated philosophical position, not a simple beginning in experience). In another sense it *is* a shape of consciousness, but not one it understands itself to be (it is already beyond what it thinks it is). In this way the beginning of the *Phenomenology* is similar to that of the *Logic*: in the latter, beginning with the determination of 'being' turns out in a sense not to be a determination at all, for it does not distinguish itself from 'nothing.' For this reason, Gadamer has argued that we do not enter a dialectical movement proper in the *Logic* until we come to the determination of 'becoming.' To be more precise, Gadamer argues that the *Logic* itself truly begins with the determination of 'becoming' because this is the first truly determinate thought. We learn this as an outcome of trying to think 'being' and 'becoming' with the result that we find

In Hegel's critique of the proofs of the existence of God he tantalizing speaks of an alternative, a 'proof of reason' (rather than a proof of the 'understanding'). He does not spell out what this would be (and if I have been correct he cannot do this except as the articulation or expression of the entire *Encyclopedia*) but this critique clarifies that it cannot be syllogistic in form, that at the most abstract level it must be thought of as the truth 'returning' to itself (that is, only as a return could it get to where it is headed), and that we are, in truth, in so far as we think at all, already on the journey that is that return. Even this limited understanding, however, is important in orienting us to Hegel's conception of proof, and this in turn will determine how we will read the *Logic* and other parts of the *Encyclopedia*. The effect of such expectations can be seen, for instance, in Taylor's commentary on the *Logic*. He expects a proof of the identity of thinking and being, and so of the possibility (and necessity) of absolute knowledge, within the *Logic*, in the form of the rationalists' proof (i.e. the normal sort of syllogizing to which we are accustomed). That is, he expects a sub-proof within the *Logic* which will then work as a premise for further arguments. Because Taylor expects the identity of thinking and being (and so the possibility of absolute knowledge) to function as a premise, he thinks that the only other

'becoming' *produces* the former, not *vice versa* as we might initially assume given the order of the text. He understands this to reveal movement within thought from the start, rather than thinking, which is necessarily always determinate thinking, first beginning with fixed determinations and then turning into the movement of these (Hans-Georg Gadamer, "The Idea of Hegel's Logic," in *Hegel's Dialectic: Five Hermeneutical Studies* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976), 86-91). In relation to Kant, we could say that, for Hegel, to speak of knowledge as *limited* to experience (or to possible objects of experience) is to make the unfounded assumption that there is a 'beyond' (it is also to *think* that 'beyond' as an abstraction) and he thinks we will discover that what we might think of as 'beyond' is within experience.

possibility (than a sub-proof within the *Logic*) would be that this can be assumed as accomplished by the *Phenomenology* and taken over by the *Logic*. (And this, he thinks, would be illegitimate, since the *Phenomenology* is not within the science proper.) Because Taylor does not find any such sub-proof within the *Logic*, he remains skeptical of what for him amounts to a move from the dialectic of thought to the dialectic of reality. Hence Taylor accepts the move from Being and Nothing to Existence as conceptually necessary, but not the move from Being and Nothing to Becoming as ontologically necessary. Charles Taylor's idea of assuming the *Phenomenology* as a premise in the argument of the *Logic* is distinct from the idea I presented above that the *Phenomenology* is an introduction to the *Logic*. The idea in the latter is that we, as reason, have come to the certainty that we are all reality (as a result of the *Phenomenology*'s dialectical movement) but this is not a premise on which to base a deduction in the *Logic*, rather it gives us a perspective from which to grasp the *Logic* as a teleological unfolding. We do begin the *Logic* with a demand (that thought, our thought, be fully concrete) but we will only know if this demand is met if we discover that the movement of the *Logic* is complete and so self-justifying. It is not inconceivable that we would start the *Logic* with the certainty with which the *Phenomenology* is meant to leave us, yet not be able to convert that certainty into knowledge. This certainty might be compared to the deep intuition of the empirical scientist who, because of that intuition, searches with great determination for a grasp of the fundamental law(s) of nature. Hegel would describe that intuition as the certainty that nature is rational. Without it there would be no searching, yet it does not function as an isolated premise assumed (rather, it informs the entire process). The *Phenomenology* ends only with the *certainty* that reason is all reality,

not the *knowledge* of this.

II.5 Hegel's Critique of the Rationalists' Proofs of the Existence of God and the 'Proof of Reason'

The rationalists' proofs of the existence of God each have the form of a syllogism which begins with a particular determination: either a fact of the world or an idea in us. Hegel accepts Kant's categorization of the former into cosmological proofs and physico-theological proofs.³²⁰ The cosmological proofs argue from the existence of any (finite, contingent) being to the necessary existence of an infinite being.³²¹ The physico-theological proofs argue from the observation of an interconnected purposiveness in nature which is 'alien' to it (that is, which is only contingently present in it) to a single free wise cause of this order.³²² Hegel takes Kant's criticism of these proofs to be, in essence, simply a statement of Hume's objection that universality and necessity cannot be deduced from particulars (for Hume, these would have to be particulars of sensation, the most primitive ideas). We will see that for Hegel the problem lies, not with universality and necessity, but with assuming them to be the result of a deduction. Nevertheless, Hegel does think that the Kantian criticism is fair (and instructive) because the rationalists share Kant's assumption that their aim is to deduce what is universal and necessary

320. EL, §50, cf. Immanuel Kant, *The Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. N. K. Smith (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1965), B631-58.

321. Cf. *The Critique of Pure Reason*, B633.

322. Cf. *The Critique of Pure Reason*, B653.

from what they suppose to be uncontroversial fact.³²³ This is why Hegel characterizes their proofs as “*affirmative* only.” They are “a concluding from *one* [reality] that *is*, and *remains*, to an *other* that equally *is as well*.”³²⁴

Kant and the rationalists also share the assumption that the determinations of thought are fixed. Hegel sees Kant’s more general criticism of the rationalist project (understanding reality through pure reason alone) to be one of Kant’s most important contributions. This criticism is that there is an undeniable ideal of reason, and in the attempt to actualize this ideal 1) we cannot avoid the application of the categories, and yet 2) the application of the categories leads to contradiction.³²⁵ Hence reason *inevitably* leads to contradiction.³²⁶ It is, I think, this idea which leads Hegel to remark (earlier in his argument), as noted above, that a defect of rationalism is that it can prove anything.³²⁷ But Hegel criticizes Kant for stopping with the negative result that reason cannot grasp its objects. It is the assumption of the fixity of the determinations of thought which prompts this ‘stop.’ But this assumption is dogmatic. It is not necessitated by reason itself.

I will return to Hegel’s claim that Kant dogmatically imposes a restriction on reason but

323. Kant differs from the rationalists, of course, in that he gives a *transcendental* deduction, but in each case we have a deduction of a conclusion from a given.

324. EL, §50 R.

325. EL, §55.

326. EL, §48 R.

327. EL, §37.

first I would like to discuss the critique of the rationalists proof from the Hegelian standpoint. To do so we must temporarily accept this standpoint. I will then address the question of how we get to that standpoint. As I have presented it, Hegel's basic ontological view is consistent with an orthodox Christian theology in which an infinite and actual God creates and governs the world. The world *is* created, it is not simply a vanishing image (as in some developments of Platonism) nor is it a finitude which is explicable as finitude (as in some naturalistic readings of Hegel).³²⁸ That this is so, Hegel says, is a manifestation of God's goodness. That God governs the world (that there *is* providence) is a manifestation of God's might.³²⁹ In this vision God is distinguishable from the world but yet is not opposed to the world. That is, the world and God cannot be thought to exist side by side (though in religious *image* they are necessarily represented as such).³³⁰ God alone is absolutely actual. To repeat, Hegel's way of expressing this is that in God alone is existence adequate to concept.³³¹ The finite, in contrast, is never fully adequate to its concept. It is, but it is not absolute. Consequent to this, if a premise of a syllogism is taken as affirming something to be true of anything finite (call this a 'finite premise' or 'finite proposition'), then we would have to say that at most the premise is true, but not completely true. In this sense, any finite premise of a syllogism must be negated.³³² The finite

328. I will turn to one such naturalistic reading of Hegel at the end of this chapter.

329. EL, §50 R.

330. The 'necessarily' is important: it is not that the religious consciousness (according to Hegel) is *wrong* to represent God and world as side by side, the form of its grasp limits it to doing so (i.e. within the limitations of the form of its grasping the truth, it gets it right).

331. "God alone is the genuine agreement between Concept and reality" EL, §24 A2.

332. In my final chapter I will discuss a case of this when Hegel speaks of the three moments of the will. Hegel thinks that in order to grasp the free will we must affirm a first (negatively

reality to which it refers does not stand on its own as actual (and hence fully 'true'). It is the acknowledgement of this negation which Hegel says is missing in the rationalists' view. They do not see it because they hold on to the determinations of thought (and of the finite in general) as fixed.

Kant's antinomies bring to light the fact *that* the understanding is incapable of deducing an infinite object which it is to grasp. Hegel's standpoint (if true) reveals *why* this is so. The necessity of negating any finite premise leaves the syllogistic form ineffective. Every syllogism can be re-written as a conditional statement: 'A therefore B' becomes $A \Rightarrow B$. But if B is the absoluteness of God and this negates A, then we have $A \Rightarrow B$ and not-A. From this we cannot conclude anything about B. The problem is that it is crucial to syllogistic logic that the truth-value of propositions not change during the course of the syllogism.³³³ But this is what happens when we move from a finite premise to an infinite conclusion.³³⁴ Hegel thinks that the ancient skeptics have seen this, though only from the side of the finite: they have recognized that no

free) moment and then negate it (but find that it is not absolutely negated). The grasping of the free will requires this movement of thought - that it affirm, then negate, and then raise/unite. This is what is so unexpected in Hegel's dialectic - that it rebuffs our common-sense assumption that either something is the case or it is not. Hegel's claim is that the movement is not simply a pedagogical one in our developing a thorough understanding of something, but that it is in reality itself.

333. The truth-value of a proposition may change with time or some other variable, but in any syllogism any such variable must be held constant.

334. Of course we usually speak of a premise *about* something finite or a conclusion *about* something infinite. The idea of Hegel's concrete thinking is that it is no longer *about* something else, but is the truth of its object.

isolated premise of the understanding is absolute and so there is no absolutely sound syllogism. This skeptical insight also shows any transcendental deduction to be insufficient, because the given which demands explanation does not itself escape skepticism. Nothing remains simply a 'given' of which we can and need to seek a ground.

The result of this for Hegel is not that we are to despair of the syllogism. What we are to see is its limitation: it is sufficient when its propositions are understood to be fixed abstractions concerning finite things which are on the same ontological level. Hypothetical reasoning is appropriate in connecting one finite proposition (and so one finite aspect of reality) to another. This is because the import of ' $A \Rightarrow B$ ' is that to the extent that A is true so also, to the same extent, is B true. There is implicit in syllogistic reasoning an assumption parallel to Descartes' that there must be at least as much reality in the cause as in its effect. In the syllogism we cannot get more out of the conclusion than is already in the premises. We cannot, for example, move from {there exists $x / x=a$ } to {for all $x / x=a$ }. It is also necessary to syllogistic reasoning that each proposition have a determinate truth-value (in addition to being unchanging within the syllogism). As such, propositions about one ontological level will not get us to propositions about another ontological level.³³⁵

335. Hegel occasionally speaks of the "infinite judgment" ('judgment' being what contemporary usage would speak of as a 'proposition'), as for example at PhG, §790-791. I take this to be the same for him as what he sometimes refers to as a 'speculative' or 'philosophical' proposition (for example in PhG, §§59-66). An example is his famous dictum: "What is rational is actual; and what is actual is rational" (PR, p.20). A 'finite' proposition affirms something limited about something which is itself limited. In contrast Hegel's 'infinite' proposition affirms something about the truth as the whole system, and its meaning - what

A syllogism which proved the existence of God would have to begin with a premise which, expressed subjectively, was absolutely certain, and, expressed objectively, was absolutely actual.³³⁶ This would be God himself. Such a syllogism then would not connect one independent

it affirms - just *is* that system. It can seem then to be a tautology, but I think Yovel gives us the best sense of what such a proposition is when he says the following:

The speculative proposition heightens the sense of dissatisfaction we get from the subject/predicate proposition [note that for Hegel this just *is* the form of the proposition], and urges our thinking to go beyond it - not to another *form* of proposition but to the complete process of dialectical thinking, which no single sentence of *any* form can express. ... the speculative proposition has relative value at the end of the road, as an abbreviated heading that summarizes a speculative process which it cannot, however, contain in a live and meaningful way (Yirmiahu Yovel, *Hegel's Preface to the Phenomenology of Spirit* (Princeton: Princeton University Press: 2005), 182-183).

I will return to this in my next chapter.

336. From our common-sense perspective, we would want to say that the premise would need to be *about* what is absolutely actual. But Hegel's idea is that if the premise successfully grasped the fully actual it would *be* it. At this point using the language of 'premise' in fact breaks down, we need to simply speak of thinking. Hegel will continue to use the term 'syllogism' but not 'premise.' For an example of this continued use cf. Hegel's use of 'syllogism' as a term referring to the logical movement of the dialectic when he presents the relation of the logic to the philosophy of nature and the philosophy of spirit:

When ... we consider the Logic as the system of *pure* thought-determinations, the other philosophical sciences - the Philosophy of Nature, and the Philosophy of Spirit - appear, in contrast, as applied logic, so to speak, for the Logic is their animating soul. Thus, the concern of those other sciences is only to [re]cognise the logical forms in the shapes of nature and spirit, shapes that are only a particular mode of expression of the forms of pure thinking. If we take the *syllogism*, for instance (not in the sense of the older formal logic, but in its truth), then it [syllogism] is that [thought-]determination in which the particular is the middle that con-

being with another independent being. If we are to speak of a syllogism which begins and ends with God it will have to be a connection of determinations which are the necessary inner life of God. This leads to what can be a frustrating aspect of Hegel's work: the 'proof' is said to be the whole explanation or articulation. It can seem in this that Hegel forever puts off any proof. I think, however, that some sense can be made of this if we take it to mean that the whole exposition will be seen to live up to the norms which are internal to thinking (I will return to these). When we truly think, that is, when we think a concrete idea - and there is only *one* absolutely concrete idea - we will be thinking God's self-knowledge, which is the only real proof of his existence.³³⁷

Hegel's diagnosis of the problem with the rationalists' proofs of the existence of God as

cludes the extremes of the universal and the singular. This syllogistic form is a universal form of all things (EL, §24 A2).

337. Graham Oppy misunderstands Hegel at the most fundamental level (concerning the question of what a philosophical argument is and what the meaning of 'success' could be) when he dismisses the very notion of an ontological proof in Hegel's work:

Hegel makes repeated assertions in these lectures [*Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion, Vol. III* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985)] that there is a successful ontological argument, though he nowhere says what the argument actually is. Some scholars have claimed that the entire Hegelian corpus constitutes an ontological argument. Since no one has ever said what the premises of this alleged argument are, there is good reason for scepticism about this scholarly claim (Graham Oppy, "Ontological Arguments," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2012 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2012/entries/ontological-arguments/>>, accessed July 19, 2013).

being in the lack of recognizing the need to negate any finite premise with which a syllogism begins can only be made from Hegel's own standpoint which acknowledges the infinity or absoluteness of God as comprehensive of the finite. But how are we to get to this standpoint? Hegel criticizes the rationalists' proofs, but, unlike Kant, he does not completely reject them. Rather, he calls them descriptions of a journey. Though they are inadequate descriptions of this journey, they are not crudely mistaken as Hume's objection would have it.³³⁸ What I will try to do in the following section is to clarify what this 'journey' is and why it is legitimate. Hegel speaks of the 'elevation' of thought.³³⁹ This is the elevation out of the mutual externality of the sensible (where each is merely side by side) which has already happened when one thinks, rather than merely senses: whereas the sensible is characterized by mutual externality, thinking is

338. Alvin Plantinga, an analytic philosopher (and so for Hegel, a philosopher who is wedded to the 'understanding' and the 'argumentative mode of philosophizing' which I will discuss in my next chapter) has presented his own version of an ontological argument for the existence of God (making use of modal logic). This proof is qualified by the idea that it shows, in the end, only that it is not irrational to believe in God: "Our verdict on these reformulated versions of St. Anselm's argument must be as follows. They cannot, perhaps, be said to *prove* or *establish* their conclusion. But since it is rational to accept their central premise, they do show that it is rational to accept that conclusion" (Alvin Plantinga, *The Nature of Necessity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1974), 221.) I note this because of an idea of Plantinga's (expressed in conversation) in relation to all such proofs that we would think it highly odd if a philosopher such as himself were to keep checking the philosophical journals to see if God's existence had been disproved, or if he were to offer an ontological argument as a reason for belief to a parent who was not a philosopher. Plantinga, from within the perspective of the understanding, is agreeing with Hegel that such proofs are philosophically important, yet not in any straightforward sense of definitively establishing a conclusion from which we will then proceed further. In "The Prospects for Natural Theology" Plantinga generalizes this thought to *all* important philosophical arguments (*Philosophical Perspectives* 5, *Philosophy of Religion* (1991), 287-315, see p. 312 for the last point).

339. Cf. EL, §12.

characterized by unity in and through diversity, and an overgrasping of its other. The 'journey' is the process of developing what is already thinking into a *pure* thinking. It is this process which Kant refuses to follow. But Kant has accepted the transformation of the sensible by thought. For Kant argues that without this there is no experience. Hegel's point, I think, is that there is no reason to accept this transformation and then not continue to follow wherever reason will lead. In order to deny the transformation of the sensible by thought, it is not enough to be an empiricist. One would need to be a Cartesian animal (i.e. a machine causally connected, and in some sense 'responsive,' to the world, but not 'thinkingly' connected to it, not overgrasping it). One must stop thinking. But one cannot just *be* un-thinking, one can only *decide* not to think (or to try not to think). And such an act of the will is itself to think.³⁴⁰ Hence we can never escape thinking. This is, I think, the sense of the legitimacy of the elevation of thought. Try as we may, we cannot avoid the elevation. It is always already present.³⁴¹

If the elevation of thought is legitimate in the above sense, what is the legitimacy of the

340. As noted before: "The distinction between thought and will is simply that between theoretical and practical attitudes. But they are not two separate faculties; on the contrary, the will is a particular way of thinking - thinking translating itself into existence ..." (PR, §4).

341. In a sense then, the image of 'elevation' is (like any image) not fully adequate to the thought it expresses. It misleadingly suggests a temporal sequence in which something was previously not elevated, as if there were a first step needed to enter on the journey. But Hegel's claim is that we are always already on this journey, the only question is whether we follow it through or perversely will not to do so ('perversely' since this must mean for Hegel that the thinking which so wills, does so contrary to its own norms, it is a thinking which tries not to be thinking).

journey which proceeds from this elevation? It is that thought has its own norms. What these are in essence is that thought knows itself to be free.³⁴² Formally this is manifested in its determination to overcome all contradiction. Contradiction is anathema to thought's freedom because contradiction cannot be thought, hence there is something which stands over and against thought.³⁴³ Hence, when it finds itself stopped by contradiction, thought is moved to resolve the contradiction. Hegel thinks that one of the great merits of the Kantian system is that it has brought the idea of thought's freedom to the foreground: "The main effect of Kant's philosophy has been that it has revived the consciousness of this absolute inwardness. ... From now on the principle of the *independence of reason*, of its absolute inward autonomy, has to be regarded as the universal principle of philosophy, and as one of the assumptions of our time."³⁴⁴ But this necessitates that we not stop with the fixity of the thought-determinations of the understanding. Going 'beyond' these (seeing the understanding as a moment of reason) is not moving beyond thought, but is rather, being true to thought. What drives this move is not anything external to thought, it is the principle of thought itself, namely freedom. Understood teleologically, thought's freedom must be conceived as self-standingness. It is restless until it knows itself as

342. If I have been correct in my interpretation of Hegel's conception of philosophy and the metaphysics which goes along with it, then freedom and concreteness are mutually entailing. They are not two independent norms. We could start with either and we will arrive at the other (and we will also arrive at freedom understood as self-determination). Above I start with freedom because I think it is more meaningful to one viewing the system from the outside and in this sense has a priority over concreteness.

343. More generally the freedom of thought finds any passivity in itself (which *remains* as a brute condition) anathema. Passivity is something to be overcome.

344. EL, §60 R.

possessing this. Freedom is an end, implicit in thinking, which moves thinking (so self-standingness is equally self-determination). Hence Hegel speaks of thinking as essentially infinite.³⁴⁵ Thus we do not, within thinking, have to make a leap from the purely finite particular to the infinite.³⁴⁶ There is no purely finite particular in thought, for with the elevation of thought we already have the infinite present implicitly. The proof of Reason is just the journey completed:

It is not just now that we can for the first time ask for a proof that the Idea is the truth; the whole preceding exposition and development of thinking contains this proof. The Idea is the result of this journey. But this result is not to be understood as if it were *only* mediated, i.e., mediated by something other than itself. Rather, the Idea is its own result, and, as such, it is immediate just as much as it is mediated.³⁴⁷

It is because the Idea is its *own* result that this stands as a proof (this is its infinitude). It is not like the conclusion of a syllogism which is mediated by premises which are other than it. In the development of a pure thinking, if we come to a point where thinking knows itself to be

345. EL, §28 A.

346. In a discussion quoted earlier (EL, §50 R) Hegel does speak of a 'leap' to the supersensible taking place, but I take him to be making the point that the leap has always already been made if one is thinking, which is to say that no leap is necessary:

The *elevation* of thinking above the sensible, its *going out* above the finite to the infinite, the *leap* that is made into the supersensible when the sequences of the sensible are broken off, all this is thinking itself; this transition is *only thinking*. To say that this passage out not to take place means that there is to be no thinking.

347. EL, §213 A.

self-standing (and self-determined) then we will have a ‘proof’ of God’s existence, since this thinking will be the divine life (the divine self-thinking thought).³⁴⁸ This will be a vindication of the ontological proof (though also a transformation of what we take the form of that proof to be). The rationalists’ ontological proofs are insufficient, not in principle, but because they have not thought God fully.³⁴⁹ Twice Hegel remarks that the rationalist proofs in effect attempt to ground an infinite God in a finite premise.³⁵⁰ This might appear to be a confusion on his part between the order of knowing and the order of being. Though Hegel himself discusses just this kind of distinction in §36 of the *Encyclopedia Logic*, so if it is a confusion it is not a naive one. But the significance of his remark is, I think, that as long as there is a falling apart of the order of knowing and the order of being, then our knowing will be still only subjective. Hence it will not be a proof, it will still be on its journey. There may be subjective certainty along the way of this journey, but this does not translate into objective proof. Only the overcoming of the division between subjective and objective in absolute knowing will provide us with the proof which the rationalists seek.

348. The transformation has to do with the degree to which our human thinking and the divine thinking are understood as united. Augustine, for instance, takes our human thinking to be united as image is to imaged. (As noted earlier, for an explication of Augustine’s argument see R. D. Crouse, “St. Augustine’s *De Trinitate*: Philosophical Method,” in E. A. Livingstone, ed., *Studia Patristica* XVI (1985): 501-510.)

349. EL, §51.

350. EL, §36 A and §50 R.

II.6. Comments on Some Alternative Interpretive Views

II.6.a. Terry Pinkard's Categorical Interpretation of Hegel's Dialectic

The interpretive view I have presented has important differences from the influential interpretation of Terry Pinkard, as found in his *Hegel's Dialectic: the Explanation of Possibility*.³⁵¹ Pinkard is concerned with giving the most charitable interpretation of Hegel's system (and particularly of his *Logic*, since Pinkard takes this to be the most fundamental work of Hegel's system) in light of contemporary anglo-american philosophy (that is, he strives to preserve in Hegel what he takes would be found relevant to late 20th c. anglo-american philosophers). To understand Pinkard's basic view of what philosophy (and so what dialectic) is for Hegel, we need to start with Pinkard's fairly radical re-reading of two key terms in Hegel: *Begriff* and *Vorstellung*. The almost universal current translation of these terms (with which I concur) is 'concept' and 'representation' respectively (with or without capitalization, depending on interpretive judgment). In my interpretation we should think of these as something like Plato's form and image, in relation to the Platonic line. For Plato, coming to a true knowing involves rising up the line from image to imaged (from image to form, and ultimately to the Good), this is to be thought of as coming to a more adequate grasp of the truth. So too in Hegel,

351. T. Pinkard, *Hegel's Dialectic: the Explanation of Possibility* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1988). Pinkard has since expressed some reservations about the account he gives in *Hegel's Dialectic*, but nonetheless this work has been influential and gives a clear presentation of Pinkard's general approach (chapters one and two are especially helpful in this regard).

philosophy is the process of converting representation into concept: it is the rise to a more adequate form of grasping the truth:

Already in this preliminary exposition, we are speaking of the distinction between the sensible, representation [*Vorstellung*], and thought [*Gedanke*]; this distinction is altogether decisive for our grasp of the nature and the kinds of cognition ... representation agrees with the *understanding*, which is only distinct from it because it posits relationships of universal and particular, or of cause and effect, etc., and therefore necessary relations between the isolated determinations of representation - whereas representation leaves them *side by side*, in its undetermined space, linked only by the simple 'and.' - The distinction between representation and thought is all the more important because we can say in general that philosophy does nothing but transform representations into thoughts - although, of course, it does go on to transform the mere thought into the Concept [*Begriff*].³⁵²

In the rise to a more adequate form of grasping of the truth, *Vorstellungen* (representations) do not remain as epistemological units (philosophy is not simply the process of including these in a larger, more comprehensive inferential scheme - Hegel criticizes the rationalists of early modern philosophy for acting as if it were).³⁵³ Hegel connects representations with 'external reflection' (or external thinking), whereas he connects concepts with (properly) 'philosophical thinking,' and he speaks of *the* Concept (in the singular) as the true form and content of philosophy. What the philosopher does is to think the truth in the form of the Concept.³⁵⁴

352. EL, §20 R.

353. So, at least, I interpret the sections of EL on the rationalists' conception of truth and our grasp of it in §§26-36. In these sections Hegel criticizes the rationalists for being caught within the finitude of the understanding (which he contrasts with the "*infinite* thinking of reason," EL, §28 A).

354. As noted earlier, Hegel claims that the philosopher thinks the Concept (as content) in the

True thoughts and scientific insight are only to be won through the labour of the [Concept]. Only the [Concept] can produce the universality of knowledge which is neither common vagueness nor the inadequacy of ordinary common sense, but a fully developed, perfected cognition [*Erkenntnis*]; ... a truth ripened to its properly matured form so as to be capable of being the property of all self-conscious Reason.³⁵⁵

Pinkard wishes to avoid reading Hegel as embroiled in metaphysics, and even (more surprisingly) as embroiled in epistemology.³⁵⁶ This begins with taking '*Begriff*' to mean, not concept, but what Pinkard terms 'conception,' and contrasting this with '*Vorstellung*,' taken to mean, not representation, but concept (revising the almost universal translation and consequent interpretation of these terms).³⁵⁷ For Pinkard a 'concept' is non-explanatory and is expressed by a term (one example he gives is the concept 'Justice').³⁵⁸ In contrast, a 'conception' is explanatory and at a minimum is expressed by a proposition (at a higher level it is expressed by a theory, and at the highest, most integrative level it is a descriptive scheme of the world, which Pinkard likens to Husserl's idea of a life-world).³⁵⁹ A crucial assumption for Pinkard is that we share, non-

form of the Concept.

355. PhG, Preface, §70.

356. For a clear and concise treatment of how a categorial theory or a categorial approach to interpretation should not be considered epistemological, cf. Klaus Hartmann, "Analytic versus Categorial Thought," in *Studies in Foundational Philosophy*, Klaus Hartmann, Amsterdam: Editions Rodopi, 1988, 294-297. The way I would put this in brief is that category theory is interested in what we can think, not in what we can know (categories "are entertained as true of being" but nonetheless "Ontological relevance of concepts cannot be claimed" (*ibid.*, 294).

357. See *Hegel's Dialectic*, 13 and note 9.

358. *Hegel's Dialectic*, 13.

359. On the connection to Husserl, see *Hegel's Dialectic*, 12. I am expanding on Pinkard's

problematically and straightforwardly, the meanings of concepts, but we differ in our conceptions.³⁶⁰ In Pinkard's view, philosophy (as Hegel understands it) is not involved in the search for and grasp of truth, but in the envisioning of conceptual possibilities. Given conflicting conceptions, philosophy seeks a more expansive, systematic, holistic conception which would allow us to hold these conflicting conceptions together (in light of the more expansive, integrative conception these initially separate and opposed conceptions are seen as only *apparently* conflicting). Such an integrative conception is called the 'best,' not because it gets at the truth (it is not thought of in terms of an inference to best explanation), but because it is more satisfying to us.³⁶¹ We desire coherence (and this remains a subjective demand). Dialectic, then, just is the process of envisioning a more integrative, holistic conception. For Pinkard 'dialectic' and 'philosophy' become strictly synonymous, rather than thinking of philosophy as the grasping of truth (understood, Hegel says, as God) and dialectic as the form which this grasp is found to have.³⁶² Contrary to Hegel's clear denial that science (philosophy in its true form) is a science

succinct account of his own interpretation of Hegel in order to clarify it. Pinkard simply speaks of 'conceptions' but his view necessitates thinking of these at different levels of integrativeness: at the bottom are 'conceptions' which are separate propositions, then from these we build evermore integrative 'conceptions' which could be called systems of beliefs (cf. ch 1, *Hegel's Dialectic*).

360. Cf. *Hegel's Dialectic*, Ch. 1. In contrast to Pinkard's idea here, I will, in my next chapter, argue that for Hegel even meaning is only gradually revealed through the process of dialectical thinking.

361. *Hegel's Dialectic*, ch. 1.

362. For understanding the truth as God, see the opening of EL where Hegel claims that philosophy cannot presuppose its object as given immediately by representation, but that it does share in common with religion its proper object: "Both of them [religion and philosophy] have the *truth* in the highest sense of the word as their [object (*Gegenstand*)], for both hold that *God* and *God alone* is the truth. Both of them also go on to deal with the

(merely) of *our* conceptions, understood as distinct from the object known (even if these conceptions are taken as objective in a Kantian sense with respect to phenomena), Pinkard is required, in order to maintain a coherent interpretation, to overturn Hegel on this point. For Pinkard (Hegelian) philosophy works out a dialectic in our conceptions of objects considered as distinct from those objects. In this sense it remains a subjective activity. One could put it this way: Pinkard re-introduces Kant's distinction between the phenomenal and the noumenal into Hegel's view (such that science is of the phenomenal), but then in addition dismisses the idea of

realm of the finite, with *nature* and the *human spirit*, and with their relation to each other and to God as to their truth" (EL, §1); for dialectic as the form which philosophy takes: "I hold that Science exists solely in the self-movement of the [Concept]" (PhG, §71). Hegel gives a more expansive articulation of this basic idea in PR, §§31-32:

The method whereby the concept, in science, develops out of itself and is merely an *immanent* progression and production of its own determinations is ... assumed to be familiar from the logic. ... The moving principle of the concept, which not only dissolves the particularizations of the universal but also produces them, is what I call *dialectic*. ... This dialectic ... is not an *external* activity of subjective thought, but the *very soul* of the content which puts forth its branches and fruit organically. This development of the Idea as the activity of its own rationality is something which thought, since it is subjective, merely observes, without for its part adding anything extra to it. To consider something rationally means not to bring reason to bear on the object [*Gegenstand*] from outside in order to work upon it, for the object is itself rational for itself; it is the spirit in its freedom, the highest apex of self-conscious reason, which here gives itself actuality and engenders itself as an existing world; and the sole business of science is to make conscious this work which is accomplished by the reason of the thing [*Sache*] itself" (PR, §31 and 31R).

Pinkard must deny Hegel's idea that the object (truth) 'is itself rational for itself' (cf. EL, §24 with R, A1, A2 and A3) and that thought, qua *merely* subjective, only looks on at the dialectic (which is equally the dialectic of thought and of reality).

the noumenal as metaphysically relevant to us. Pinkard writes:

To make a play on a Wittgensteinian principle: the world is the totality of *Sachen*, 'matters', not of *Dinge*, 'things.' In our experience, whether it be in the laboratory or of what Husserl called the life-world, we encounter conceptual unities, configurations of the world produced by our adopting certain descriptive schemes. Behind or beyond this world is nothing (even the idea of a thing-in-itself functions as a limiting concept in our conceptual apparatus).³⁶³

Pinkard accepts that Hegel thought that he (Hegel) had determined the true conception (to use Pinkard's special terminology), but Pinkard thinks Hegel was mistaken about his own project in this regard - in principle, all that is available to Hegel in this dialectic is to develop a possible conception that would be satisfying to us.

An important assumption in Pinkard's work is that *if* Hegel were doing metaphysics, this would have to mean that Hegel was determining what entities exist in the world. That is, Pinkard assumes metaphysics has the general form that Hegel thinks it takes in the early modern period (what Hegel describes as a metaphysics of things and their properties).³⁶⁴ I would claim in contrast to this that Hegel's metaphysics is better understood through the category of activity, which is why the terminology of 'spirit' is indispensable to him. In the *Phenomenology* Hegel treats the content of religion as one with philosophy and there describes what is actual (the True) and the distinction between faith and speculative knowing as follows: "[in revealed religion] God

363. *Hegel's Dialectic*, 12.

364. Cf. EL, §§26-36.

is *revealed as He is*; He is immediately present as He is *in Himself*, i.e. He is immediately *present* as spirit. God is attainable in pure speculative knowledge alone and *is* only in that knowledge, and is only that knowledge itself, for He is Spirit."³⁶⁵

In Pinkard's interpretation of what philosophy is for Hegel, the distinction between understanding (*Verstand*) and reason (*Vernunft*) is taken to be as follows: understanding is the process of reasoning in which we attempt to justify propositions in isolation (it assumes atomist justification is possible) while reason is the process of reasoning by which propositions are justified by reference to a system of propositions (it assumes justification must be systematic and holistic).³⁶⁶ Following from this, Hegel's consistent talk of the 'movement of thought' is taken to be a metaphor for the logical relations of propositions in this holistic scheme (itself a conception but one which is integrative of other conceptions).³⁶⁷ It is important to note that in Pinkard's interpretation the proposition is central - it remains as the conceptual unit (we might say epistemological unit, except that Pinkard wishes to deny that Hegel is doing epistemology). This is one of the central features of his interpretation which allows it to be easily related to and integrated into prominent research projects in Anglo-American philosophy of the late 20th c. (the most obvious being the pragmatism of philosophers such as Wilfrid Sellars and Robert

365. PhG, §761.

366. *Hegel's Dialectic*, 6. Pinkard uses the language of "Kantian faculty" for understanding and reason.

367. *Hegel's Dialectic*, 14. This follows in Pinkard's view because the more integrative conception arrived at is static - it expresses the inter-relations of a set of propositions, so there is no room for an idea of movement (taken literally) within it.

Brandom).³⁶⁸ To put this in Hegel's terms, the resulting view of what philosophy or dialectic produces is a conceptual possibility in which *Vorstellungen* are inter-connected (integrated coherently) in a *Begriff*.³⁶⁹ This pays the price of doing considerable violence to Hegel's own explanation of what he is doing, but has the value, in Pinkard's judgment, of being philosophically relevant. Pinkard must disregard Hegel's claim that philosophy's goal is to become "science" in the sense that it no longer seeks truth but is actual knowing³⁷⁰ and that in this knowing logic will be metaphysics.³⁷¹ Pinkard must also set aside Hegel's claim that the

368. I have in mind works such as W. Sellars, *Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind*, introduction by R. Rorty and study guide by R. Brandom (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1997) and R. Brandom, *Making it Explicit: Reasoning, Representing, and Discursive Commitment* (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1994). For an excellent example of putting the kind of interpretative reading of Hegel that we find in Pinkard to work in a contemporary debate, cf. Robert Brandom's "Some Pragmatist Themes in Hegel's Idealism: Negotiation and Administration in Hegel's Account of the Structure and Content of Conceptual Norms," *European Journal of Philosophy* 7, no. 2 (July 1999), 165-189. In this paper Brandom relates two theses. The first one he takes to be a common place pragmatist thesis, namely, the semantic pragmatist thesis that "the *use* of concepts determines their *content*" (164). The second he takes to be, on the surface, a barely intelligible (to the contemporary reader) idealist thesis, namely, that "the structure and unity of the *concept* is the same as the structure and unity of the *self*" (164). Brandom argues that while the first thesis is a common place, it is far from being clearly understandable (or to put it differently, there remain in the contemporary debates about semantic pragmatism deep unsolved problems). Brandom's goal is to develop a reading of the second thesis and then show how, on this reading, it (that second thesis) allows us to understand how the first might actually work (rather than just naively assuming it to be workable).

369. To clarify: for Pinkard, rather than rising above *Vorstellungen* to *Begriff*, we gather together *Vorstellungen* (in particular, apparently conflicting *Vorstellungen*) into a systematic conception which relates the *Vorstellungen* but does not transform them.

370. "The true shape in which truth exists can only be the scientific system of such truth. To help bring philosophy closer to the form of Science, to the goal where it can lay aside the title 'love of knowing' and be *actual* knowing - that is what I have set myself to do" (PhG, §5).

371. The opening sections of the EL (§§1 - 25) argue for this. EL, §24 concludes: "Thus *logic*

"True is ... the Bacchanalian revel in which no member is not drunk; yet because each member collapses as soon as he drops out, the revel is just as much transparent and simple repose."³⁷² In Pinkard's reconstruction, the moments - now considered as propositions - stand soberly side by side, inter-related in a (more comprehensive) conception which is itself static. One could only speak literally of movement in the sense of our subjective development in bringing about the more comprehensive conception, but not in the sense of movement in the conception itself. As noted above, Hegel's talk of such movement is taken to be a metaphor for the logical relations between propositions in the larger systematic conception.³⁷³ That larger conception - Hegel's 'Concept' (*Begriff*) - will be a conceptual possibility, not what the religious consciousness (correctly according to Hegel) refers to as 'God'³⁷⁴ nor what Hegel's philosopher would call the 'true infinite,' understood as 'subject' no less than 'substance.'³⁷⁵ Is the excision of so many central claims in Hegel and such a radical reconstruction of his project worth it? This is a very interesting question.³⁷⁶ I ask it, not in order to settle the matter here, but to note that how anyone

coincides with *metaphysics*, with the science of *things* grasped in *thoughts* [*Die Logik fällt daher mit der Metaphysik zusammen, der Wissenschaft der Dinge in Gedanken gefaßt*] that used to be taken to express the *essentialities* of the *things* [*Dinge*]."

372. PhG, §47.

373. *Hegel's Dialectic*, 14.

374. Cf. EL, §1.

375. On the 'true infinite' cf. EL, §28 addition and §§94, 95 and 111, with their additions; on the true as substance and subject, PhG, §17: "In my view, which can be justified only by the exposition of the system itself, everything turns on grasping and expressing the True, not only as *Substance*, but equally as *Subject*."

376. This question needs to be qualified by the acknowledgment that the obscurity of Hegel's expression demands such a high degree of interpretation that one must be wary of citing individual sentences as obviously contradicting a particular interpretation.

answers it will in large part depend on one's sympathies with philosophical naturalism more generally. If one sees philosophy as being akin to the natural sciences, and one accepts that the current best science should inform one's plausibility judgments involved in accepting one explanatory theory over another (if one accepts that being 'prejudiced' in this specific sense is precisely what will most likely lead one to the 'best' theory), then one will be inclined to have the plausibility judgments which inform one's choice of the most charitable interpretation of Hegel be determined by relevance to current research projects (with the confidence that this is not simply a matter of personal preference). This is, I think, precisely what is moving Pinkard in his determination of what we should accept as the most charitable interpretation of Hegel. An alternative to this is to read Hegel while keeping open the possibility that Hegel's work stands as a challenge to dominant contemporary views of what philosophy is and what its proper methodology is, in particular, as a challenge to philosophical naturalism. If we take the latter approach, then we will have more patience with keeping Hegelian claims before our mind which are not fully translatable into the categories of contemporary philosophy (rather than setting these aside) and we will not be so quick to force his argument into the form of propositions and syllogisms. We will be open to the *possibility* that we may come to see that Hegel's own categories (or language) and his over-arching form of argument are necessary for a clear and rational articulation of the truth (in Hegel's terms, we will be open to the possibility that these categories are necessary to a true science).

II.6.b. Frederick Beiser's Naturalistic Interpretation of Hegel's Conception of Philosophy

Hegel gives us a wealth of material with which to work towards a naturalized, historicized view of culture and thought, and so of philosophy. However, if, as I have argued, Hegel's own position has at its center the unity of the infinite and the finite, and further that in this unity there is a priority of the infinite, such that a theological dimension (and with it a conception of philosophy as idealism and a journey in which there is a rise from representational to speculative thinking) is correct, then we must view any naturalizing interpretations of Hegel as (possibly very productive) innovations which must set aside much that is at the heart of Hegel's own philosophical view. My claim is that such interpretations are no less drastic than if one were to develop a naturalized psychology out of Augustine's work (which is not to condemn them, only to be clear about their nature). This, however, is a contentious claim. One interpreter who has argued that a full-fledged naturalism just *is* Hegel's view is Frederick Beiser. In what follows I will be criticizing Beiser's interpretation with respect to this specific question - whether it does justice to Hegel's view. I do not question whether interpreting Hegel this way produces a cogent and interesting philosophical view of its own (I think it does). I engage in this criticism because I think it helps to clarify the original Hegelian position. My focus will be to bring out how in Beiser's interpretation we lose the systematicity of Hegel's view and (necessarily connected with this) Hegel's form of argument which is intended to free us from the kind of either-or logic

to which Beiser is wedded.³⁷⁷

Beiser interprets Hegel as initiating a revolution in philosophy: "Hegel's thought *historicizes* philosophy, explaining its purpose, principles, and problems in historical terms."³⁷⁸ Beiser sees three essential features in this revolution: 1) historicism becomes the self conscious method of philosophy allowing it to avoid transcendental illusions;³⁷⁹ 2) philosophy is in need of historical explanation just as are politics, religion, and literature;³⁸⁰ and 3) the lesson of history is that "what appears to be given, eternal, or natural is in fact the product of human activity, and indeed of that activity in a specific cultural context."³⁸¹ These features lead Beiser to claim that Hegel himself intends to articulate a naturalized theology³⁸² and a materialism much like that of Marx, rather than absolute idealism.³⁸³

377. Of course, a reader of Hegel might think these were *sensible* results! In contrast to Pinkard, Beiser gives us a metaphysical reading of Hegel (one that is about our historical conditioning in which the finite is explained by the finite). Though Beiser speaks of this reading as 'non-metaphysical,' he does not mean this in Pinkard's sense of the term. By 'non-metaphysical' Beiser means 'non-spiritual' (in a religious sense) or 'non-natural.' What Beiser is concerned to avoid is any reference to the infinite (except in the mathematical sense of the sum of all that there is).

378. Frederick Beiser, "Hegel's Historicism," in *The Cambridge Companion to Hegel*, ed. Frederick Beiser (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 270.

379. *Ibid.*, 272-3.

380. *Ibid.*, 272.

381. *Ibid.*, 272.

382. *Ibid.*, 289.

383. *Ibid.*, 277-279. In fact, I would suggest that Beiser's account waivers between interpreting Hegel along Marxist lines and Nietzschean lines. I will be arguing that Beiser can only hold these together by the arbitrary introduction of a set of premises and with them an acceptance of a breakdown of systematicity in Hegel's position.

No one would doubt that "History cannot be consigned to a corner in Hegel's system,"³⁸⁴ but what is striking is that Hegel says something far more revolutionary than Beiser allows: Hegel tells us that *thinking* has a history. In Beiser's account the subject is history, and its products include philosophy. In Hegel's account thinking itself is the subject.³⁸⁵ For this reason Hegel criticizes an historical age as a dead age, and he is not embarrassed by the designation "absolute idealism."³⁸⁶ Beiser sees Hegel as continuing the Kantian critical revolution but taking this further in seeing that there is no 'pure reason' that is critical, only an historicized reason that can become aware of itself as historical product. Beiser does not explain how this historicized reason could know its awareness of this very historicism to be true, even though Beiser does not want to present Hegel ultimately as an historical relativist. The only option left for Beiser, as I will discuss later, is dogmatically to assert (or have Hegel dogmatically assert) that history has a purpose - human freedom (and, implicit in this, that human knowing free from illusion is possible). Without that dogmatic assertion we are left with a view of human thinking as historical product much closer to Nietzsche's *Genealogy of Morals* (where the whole question of

384. *Ibid.*, 270.

385. I will return to Beiser's attempt to avoid this as an illegitimate hypostasization of spirit.

386. Hegel, "Introduction to the History of Philosophy," (hereafter 'Introduction, HP') in G. W. F. Hegel, *Hegel's Idea of Philosophy*, trans. and essay by Quentin Lauer (New York: Fordham University Press, 1983), 9. Beiser is correct to point out that for Hegel a philosophy does not transcend the consciousness of its age, but Hegel does not speak of philosophy as the *product* of its age, it is said to be the consciousness of what is *substantial* in its age. (See my discussion of this important term earlier in this chapter.) I would add that for Hegel there is no *comprehension* unless thought is free, and as mere product it is not free.

truth or falsity is set aside in favor of genealogy) and with a post-modern Hegel whose concern is to escape the illusions of past philosophers (with the difficulty of answering what one escapes into - another illusion?).³⁸⁷ The last point is not meant as a flippant response to post-modern thinkers. It is, I think, a serious question internal to their own philosophical activity. They, no less than Hegel, are concerned with freedom. If we, rather than possessing the truth (Hegel would say the truth possesses us, not *vice versa*), are always within a discourse, can our freedom consist in anything more than the endlessly restless negative activity of freeing ourselves from particular discourses? Foucault writes of this activity with respect to Hegel as follows (interestingly, with a note of reservation about the philosopher's task as he conceives it):

But truly to escape Hegel involves an exact appreciation of the price we have to pay to detach ourselves from him. It assumes that we are aware of the extent to which Hegel, insidiously perhaps, is close to us; it implies a knowledge, in that which permits us to think against Hegel, of that which remains Hegelian. We have to determine the extent to which our anti-Hegelianism is possibly one of his tricks directed against us, at the end of which he stands, motionless, waiting for us.³⁸⁸

Beiser takes Hegel to be concerned with freeing philosophy from the grip of "transcendental illusion" and the "illusion of a-historicity" that has long held it ("Hegel's Historicism," 273). I would suggest to the contrary that Hegel looks back over the long course of the history of

387. See "Hegel's Historicism," 270-4, especially 273.

388. Michel Foucault, "The Discourse on Language," in *The Archeology of Knowledge*, 235 (75), quoted in Leonard Lawler, "Introduction," in Jean Hyppolite, *Logic and Existence*, trans. Leonard Lawler and Amit Sen (Albany: State University Press of New York Press, 1997), xv.

philosophy and finds something *accomplished*, not an *illusion* from which we must free ourselves. This is not to deny development, and development that continues into Hegel's own age, rather, it is to *understand* that development.

What is missing in Beiser's account is Hegel's insight (or at a minimum, his central claim) that thought is free.³⁸⁹ It is not the product of something other than itself as Beiser assumes.³⁹⁰ Nor is it merely an abstraction through which we think *about* the world.³⁹¹ Rather, for Hegel, in thought we *think* the world. If, as does Beiser, we collapse Hegel's distinctions between philosophy and *a* philosophy, thought itself and merely subjective thought, reason and understanding, then the above will appear absurd. Beiser claims that Hegel subverts Descartes' philosophy in the spirit of his own age - an age that has become aware of the historical production of human culture, and with this, of all claims to knowledge.³⁹² I claim that Hegel subverts (in the sense of sublates) *both* Descartes' philosophy *and* the historicism of the 18th. century. Hegel subverts the historical assumptions of figures such as Herder, Montesquieu and James Steuart because he argues that the historical development of human culture is *not* opposed to the eternal, the infinite, the God of traditional orthodox Christian teaching, the absolute of

389. Cf. Introduction, HP, 71-2.

390. Cf. "Hegel's Historicism," 270, 272 and 274.

391. *Ibid.*, 275. See my earlier discussion of the distinction between 'thinking the world' and 'thinking about the world.'

392. *Ibid.*, 270-276. The historicizing is taken to be universal: all human activity, both practical and theoretical must be understood as historical product (religion, philosophy, politics etc.).

Plato and Hegel.³⁹³ This is because the reason (or thinking) which becomes certain of itself, which knows itself as inwardly free (as with Descartes), is not a finite thinking of a finite mind: it *is* our thinking, but this is not other than the infinite divine thinking. That infinite divine thinking is not *contained* by history or *produced* by history but rather, is its own self-determined (free) development - and that development *is* history. The priority here is crucial: for Hegel, without that priority there is no history, only process (if even that). The contrast is the same as that between a container filled with molecules of a gas which are moving about (over time the arrangement changes but there is no 'history' here, except metaphorically speaking) and the changes in a subject over the course of her life (she *has* a history).

Contrary to the above, Beiser's interpretation acknowledges only the subjective side of

393. Herder, Montesquieu and James Steuart are Beiser's examples, along with Schelling, whom I leave out in the list above because I think Beiser misrepresents him (by conflating the idea that the ego *has* a history with the idea that the ego is a *product* of history). In general there is a tension that runs through Beiser's account between something *having* a history and something being a product of history (and so being *contained* by history). This is why Beiser can, surprisingly, quote Hegel's famous phrase from the Preface of the PR, "Philosophy is its own age comprehended in thought" (PR, p.21) and then a few pages later gloss this as "philosophy is *only* its own time comprehended in thought" ("Hegel's Historicism," 274, my emphasis), then, a few more pages on, refer to Hegel's idea that the logical development of thought and the historical development of philosophy are parallel (*Ibid.*, 277). Shlomo Avineri is, I think, more perceptive when he discusses philosophy's relation to its age: he argues that in comprehending its time, philosophy is already beyond it, not a mere product of it (*Hegel's Theory of the Modern State* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), 129). The same tension in Beiser's interpretation is found in remarks such as the following: "[Hegel] transformed and reinterpreted [the tradition of natural law]. Instead of seeing natural law as an eternal law above the process of history, Hegel historicizes it, so that it becomes the purpose of history itself" (*Ibid.*, 279).

thought. He takes Hegel to be furthering Kant's project of a critical philosophy which knows and is ruled by the limits of reason, but now this is a self-consciously historicized reason.³⁹⁴ That is, unlike Kant, Beiser takes Hegel to be asserting that the limitations of reason are determined by a history which is independent of, and prior to, reason.³⁹⁵ Beiser therefore cannot see a particular philosophy as a moment in the *one* self-determining activity which is philosophy (in Hegel's account).³⁹⁶ Further, he confuses the limitations (as understood by him) of a particular philosophy with the limitations of philosophy itself.³⁹⁷ Viewing thinking as subjective, abstract, and the result of material-historical conditions leads Beiser to systematically misinterpret some central interrelated aspects of Hegel's philosophy: the nature of philosophy, the purpose of history, and spirit. Beiser correctly identifies philosophy with the history of philosophy in Hegel, however, he does not see in this the unity of one activity: "... the philosopher of history will examine the cultures of the past in terms of *their own* beliefs, values, and ideals."³⁹⁸ It is true that, for Hegel, we must not import contemporary assumptions into an historical moment in the history of philosophy. However, Hegel's argument is that what allows us to think the successive moments in that history is that it is one and the same thing moving us and it, namely thought

394. *Ibid.*, 271, 273.

395. Reason then becomes like the shoes which are the product of the cobbler's activity (but without the intentionality of the cobbler).

396. Introduction, HP, 71-85.

397. It might seem that Beiser's account is not limited to the subjective aspect of thought when he discusses the unity of subject and object in thinking. However, the "object" here is the abstract universal, produced and refined by the (individual or communal) activity of thinking about it.

398. *Ibid.*, 284.

itself. Because Beiser addresses only the subjective side of thought he sees a problem in Hegel's methodology: how *do* we avoid imposing our own attitudes and values on a past philosophy, even if this is not our intention?³⁹⁹ Beiser's answer is that we can only try our best not to, being aware of this pitfall. This is indeed a problem if thinking is merely subjective: how can we enter someone else's subjective state?

Hegel is insistent that philosophy is a unity and that truth is the system of philosophy. Beiser's account, however, allows for neither of these. He does begin with the idea that philosophy must be presuppositionless. This is what Beiser takes to motivate Hegel's historicism.⁴⁰⁰ But it is instructive that Beiser in fact finds it necessary to lay down several premises as the foundation of philosophy as Hegel conceives it. These are the following: the

399. *Ibid.*, 286.

400. The idea would be that philosophy simply grasps itself as the product of its age. This seems more like philosophy admitting (or becoming cognizant of) history as its presupposition, but Beiser claims the following: "if Philosophy is to be truly presuppositionless, Hegel maintains, then it must not abstract from, but incorporate history within itself" (*ibid.*, 271). However, Beiser's argument continues as follows:

Hegel's philosophical revolution consisted not only in subverting the Cartesian heritage, but also in historicizing the traditional objects of classical metaphysics, God, providence and immortality. Hegel argues that metaphysics is possible only if its central concepts are explicable in historical terms.

What Beiser does not explain is how philosophy historicizes but is not itself historicized. Hence we find the tension noted above between an historicized philosophy and a philosophy incorporating history.

acceptance of Kant's critical approach;⁴⁰¹ "the doctrine that each society is a unique whole,"⁴⁰² Herder's view of tradition as a 'sacred chain' linking past to present;⁴⁰³ and the dictum of Aristotle (as interpreted by Beiser) that universals exist only in the thing.⁴⁰⁴

There are two ways in which Beiser's account leaves Hegel's philosophy unsystematic. The first is if, to be intelligible, it needs the above premises (and their givenness remains in the end result). The second, and more problematic, is in the explication of the Hegelian philosophy resulting from these premises. Beiser presents two strands which are asserted as belonging together, but for which Beiser does not (and, given his materialism, could not) reveal any intrinsic connection. The need for these two strands comes about as follows. When he argues against those critics who claim Hegel's philosophy leads to a complete relativism, Beiser counters with "the central thesis of Hegel's philosophy of history: that *the* end of history is the self-awareness of freedom."⁴⁰⁵ It is significant that this is stated as a dogma. We don't know *why* it is the end of history in Beiser's account. On the other hand, in order that this be squared with Beiser's description of Hegel's philosophy as historically determined he must introduce the idea that Hegel's philosophy operates on two levels: one "horizontal" and the other "vertical."⁴⁰⁶ The horizontal level is an account of the material conditions of a nation which produce "unique and

401. *Ibid.*, 271.

402. *Ibid.*, 274.

403. *Ibid.*, 275.

404. *Ibid.*, 290.

405. *Ibid.*, 279.

406. *Ibid.*, 279.

incommensurable values." The vertical level is an account of the contribution each culture makes to the end of world history.⁴⁰⁷ What is significant is that these are simply two different accounts (not intrinsically connected), and moreover, the "vertical level" appears out of nowhere as a dogmatic assertion to save Hegel from the charge of being a thorough-going historical relativist.

Likewise, in answering those who criticize Hegel for committing a "genetic fallacy," Beiser finds it necessary to speak of "two standards of truth" in Hegel's philosophy of history. One "determines whether a philosophy adequately expresses the spirit of its age" while the other is "the universal goal of world history."⁴⁰⁸ Parallel to this Beiser finds two strands at work in the political implications of Hegel's philosophy. What he takes to be Hegel's naturalism (the material determination of a culture) leads to a conservatism, while the goal of world history - none other than the ideals of the French revolution - leads to a progressive side.⁴⁰⁹ It is not accidental that Beiser thinks Hegel arbitrarily bestows these ideals on history,⁴¹⁰ for Beiser's account has not allowed for there to be an intrinsic connection between the "horizontal" and the "vertical," the two standards of truth, and the above two strands of political thought. This is brought to a focus in Beiser's interpretation of Hegel's famous dictum that "What is rational is

407. *Ibid.*, 279-280.

408. *Ibid.*, 281-282.

409. *Ibid.*, 295.

410. *Ibid.*, 295.

actual; and what is actual is rational."⁴¹¹ Rather than understanding this as a unified thought (or better, a unified *abbreviated* thought) Beiser takes it to express two *conflicting* thoughts, one liberal (that "liberty and equality, which have been sanctioned by reason, will become realized of necessity in history itself"), one conservative (that institutions "arise of necessity from their environment, and are therefore appropriate to it").⁴¹² Beiser accepts that Hegel does not want the opposition to remain, but the claim that it ultimately does not remain is only introduced as an arbitrary premise.

That these sides cannot be thought together, but only asserted as being together is a result of a more fundamental dis-unity in Beiser's conception of Hegelian philosophy. He characterizes it as having a phenomenological method which has an empirical element and an *a priori* element.⁴¹³ According to Beiser, it is empirical because it takes the beliefs, values and ideals of a culture on their own terms. It is *a priori* in its knowledge that the end of history is the self-consciousness of freedom. These are not explicated as *moments* of one activity, but as two separate elements, which, like oil and water, emulsify, but do not *mix*, and so produce different strands of thought.

In addition to the lack of systematicity that results on Beiser's reading of Hegel, a

411. PR, p.20.

412. "Hegel's Historicism," 296.

413. *Ibid.*, 284-285.

significant *prima facie* obstacle to Beiser's materialistic, non-spiritual, reading of Hegel is Hegel's constant use of theological terms. Beiser acknowledges this, but argues that Hegel's own principles demand that theology be naturalized. One of these principles, according to Beiser, is the Kantian prohibition against knowledge of transcendent metaphysical entities. Beiser argues that Hegel follows this by developing an immanent teleology, in which the end of nature and history is internal to them. Beiser interprets this to mean that the finite must be explained by the finite: "everything in nature is explicable in its own terms without reference to the supernatural."⁴¹⁴ Hegel is presented as stipulating that this immanent end is human freedom, or, more precisely, the perfect (political) state in which there is "mutual recognition between free and equal persons."⁴¹⁵ The concept of 'spirit' just is the abstract conception of this end result of the material process of history. This is not to be thought of as a cause of that history, nor is it to be hypostasized and thought as prior to or transcending it. Spirit by itself would be "a general term or universal," it only exists in the particular state of affairs which is the end of history.⁴¹⁶ Beiser cites Aristotle as presenting the distinction between what is first in the order of existence and what is first in the order of explanation. Hegel's concept of spirit is said to fall into the latter category, not the first.⁴¹⁷

414. *Ibid.*, 289.

415. *Ibid.*, 292.

416. *Ibid.*, 290. Beiser does not say so explicitly, but he must set aside Hegel's crucial and central idea of the 'concrete universal' in order to hold this position. Beiser replaces it with what he takes to be (mistakenly in my view) the Aristotelean 'universal.'

417. *Ibid.*, 291-292.

There is much that is right in this interpretation, but Beiser's insistence that Hegel is *either* a metaphysician espousing a thing-like God *or* a naturalist, that 'spirit' is *either* a general term *or* an hypostasized thing, leads Beiser to a one-sided and so inaccurate reading of Hegel. A central problem with Beiser's interpretation of Hegel as presenting a naturalized theology is that in it we do not find an *end* which explains, we find only a *result* described. It is *as if* history had a purpose, but we cannot say how it does indeed have such a purpose. Two things make this apparent. First, Beiser is unable to demonstrate an internal necessity in the process. This is why the end (freedom) is introduced as a dogmatic claim. Second, though *we* might assume the end to be good, there is nothing in Beiser's account that would allow for such a normative judgement. That is to say then that some *other* principle, outside the process of history as described by Beiser, is necessary in order for us to know the end to be good, and not just a fact about a particular state of affairs. But then the process is not one of an immanent teleology, in which the finite is self-explanatory in terms of its own finitude. The process of history and its end as presented by Beiser is closer to what Aristotle calls 'luck' or 'chance': a process which looks like it is purposeful, and could have been purposeful, but is in fact only the happy coincidence of causes unrelated to the end result as cause.⁴¹⁸ An Aristotelian example is when someone goes to the market and by chance meets someone else there who owes him money and pays it to him (presuming each went only with the intent to buy food). There is, for Aristotle, no teleology here, no end immanent in the process, explaining the payment of debt, only luck. It is because of

418. Aristotle, *Physics*, trans. R. P. Hardie and R. K. Gaye, in *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, ed. R. McKeon (New York: Random House, 1941), Book *Beta*, chs. iv-vi.

this that Beiser, while affirming an immanent teleology in Hegel at some points, no less denies it at other points. For example, he says that "Providence *will be determined* by some end within history and nature."⁴¹⁹ This sentence is intelligible only if we take 'end' to be mere result, for Beiser is not arguing that providence is an aspect of God's self-determining activity. It is in fact a rejection of the very idea of providence (providence becomes whatever happens to result). But of such a result Hegel says: "the bare result is the corpse which has left the guiding tendency behind it."⁴²⁰

There is a confusion in Beiser's reference to Aristotle which serves to obscure the above difficulty concerning the presence or lack of teleology in Hegel. Beiser claims that Aristotle distinguishes between what is first in the order of existence and what is first in the order of explanation. The first category is taken to be ontological, the second epistemological. Hence it would seem that we can have an explanation which does not entail any strange metaphysical entities. But the distinction which Aristotle consistently makes in his works is not the one above. Rather, it is the distinction between what is first in the order of *inquiry* and what is first in the order of explanation.⁴²¹ The former is epistemological in nature, the latter, both ontological and epistemological. Hegel's point, which is not foreign to Aristotle, is that what makes the inquiry possible is that, in some sense, the end is in the beginning. If it were not, we could never arrive

419. "Hegel's Historicism," 289 (italics mine).

420. PhG, §3.

421. Cf. Aristotle, *Physics*, trans. R. P. Hardie and R. K. Gaye, in *The Basic works of Aristotle*, ed. R. McKeon (New York: Random House, 1941), Book *Alpha*, ch. i.

at what is first in the order of explanation. And to be an explanation, the end must be a (final) cause. If we limit our conception of cause to efficient causality then we have already settled the question of teleology, we have asserted process over development. This is (despite Beiser's intention to allow it) to deny that reason is in history.

In contrast to Beiser's account, Hegel is concerned, not with stipulating an end to history, but with seeing how reason is indeed in history (and nature). His is an internal teleology in which the finite, out of itself, demands explanation in terms of the infinite, but not so as to obliterate the finite. (On my interpretive view, if Hegel would teach us one thing, it is that the finite is *not* self-explanatory - the very opposite of what Beiser takes to be a central Hegelian insight.) The finite necessitates the infinite, but so too, the infinite necessitates the finite. Beiser is prevented from seeing this because he assumes that a theological or 'metaphysical' (here for Beiser this means 'non-naturalistic') account must amount to superstition: it must, independent of reason, posit God as a transcendent entity ('thing'), not an infinite activity. The idea here is Kantian, though Beiser does not refrain from describing what such a 'thing' would be, contrary to Kant's prohibition.⁴²² What the hypostasization of spirit would mean for Beiser is that God is the supreme puppet master behind the scenes, mocking human freedom and imposing his (external)

422. Beiser is not speaking on his own behalf, but he does seem to endorse the Kantian prohibition against claims to knowledge of noumena which he takes Hegel to accept as a foundational premise. Given this, it is inconsistent to speak counter-factually about God or more generally about the noumenal (Beiser's claim is that if God existed then he would be a puppet master).

end on the world.⁴²³ This is a conception of God as a Platonic demiurge working on a matter which is alien to him. It in fact reduces God to a finite (though all-powerful, all-knowing) being who stands in a particular relation to the world (that of puppet master to puppets) rather than transcending it and/or being immanent in it. This view is not to be found in the Christian tradition of orthodox theological reflection from the early church fathers to Luther.⁴²⁴ It is that tradition, in its most developed form (the Lutheran reformed Christianity of his day), which Hegel claims has nothing in it to embarrass philosophy (where by 'philosophy' Hegel does not mean a handmaiden to theology in the sense of sacred doctrine, but the fully free activity of thinking). Ironically, from the perspective of that Lutheranism, Beiser's gloss on what God would have to be for Hegel, if Hegel affirmed the divine as present in history, is itself a form of naturalism, not supernaturalism (as Beiser contends), for it presents God as just one more finite thing (if a very special finite thing).⁴²⁵

423. "Hegel's Historicism," 289-290.

424. It is, of course, related to questions about free will and divine providence which *are* found within that tradition.

425. In other words Beiser first translates theological doctrine into naturalistic terms (making God one special part of nature) and *then*, in that transformed state, argues that it is incompatible with Hegel's philosophy.

II.6.c. Paul Franks on German Idealism and Systematicity

In contrast to Frederick Beiser's interpretation, which leaves Hegel as a non-systematic philosopher (though one with great insight into our historical conditioning and all-too-finite human nature) and also in contrast to Terry Pinkard's interpretation of Hegel, which I would term generally a subjectivist account (in the specific sense that it claims that Hegel's focus is solely on our categorizations in a systematic conceptual scheme and the adequacy of that scheme's satisfaction to us, and not on any claim to truth or metaphysical knowledge), in *All or Nothing: Systematicity, Transcendental Arguments, and Skepticism in German idealism*, Paul Franks has argued that the German idealists after Kant do seek a systematic knowledge of the whole of reality (despite differences, Franks argues, the demand for systematicity is uniformly present and motivated by skeptical challenges). I see the interpretation of Hegel's project as taking up and transforming Plato's project, for which I have been arguing, as complementary to this (though, in a sense to be specified shortly, I take that project to be more basic). Franks' focus is on the immediate reaction to Kant's thought in the period up to 1800, and in particular he focuses on three minor figures: Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi, Salomon Maimon, and Karl Leonhard Reinhold.⁴²⁶ However, his thesis is that the debates of this period have the outcome of articulating a central problem for philosophy and a particular form that an answer to this would

426. For a brief introduction to the latter two figures in the context of these debates, see George di Giovanni, "The Facts of Consciousness" in George di Giovanni and H. S. Harris, *Between Kant and Hegel: Texts in the Development of Post-Kantian idealism* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1985), 3-50.

have to take which is consistently found as a project which remains intact right through to Hegel.⁴²⁷ Franks puts the question in terms of the Agrippan trilemma as found in ancient skepticism - at the deepest level, the problem motivating both Kant and his successors is "the ancient worry that there can be no genuine justification because any putative justification is vulnerable to the Agrippan trilemma: if challenged, it turns out to lead either to an arbitrary assumption, or to a vicious circle, or to an infinite regress."⁴²⁸ Franks argues that Kant looks to rationalism as found in Leibniz as paradigmatic of the form which an adequate answer would have to take, and eventually is lead to his dualism of the phenomenal realm and the noumenal realm in order to answer the trilemma.⁴²⁹ Franks argues that the idealists on the other hand (and he thinks that all the figures of this movement can be treated as one in this regard) are moved by the same dilemma, but look to Spinoza as paradigmatic of the form which an adequate answer would have to take (taking from Spinoza the idea of system as holistic and monistic). Franks thinks that understanding the question which the idealists are trying to answer will help to correct

427. "... although I have drawn largely upon resources developed before 1800, none of the undeniably important developments after 1800 renders my reconstruction of the German idealist project irrelevant to that period" (*All or Nothing*, 11). In his reconstruction Franks presents the 'Spinozism controversy' initiated by Jacobi as decisive in that it brings about a new response to the problem of skepticism: while for Kant, skepticism is important, but as an academic matter of significance to the philosopher alone, Jacobi argues that nihilism is the ultimate result of a Spinozistic answer to skepticism and the idealists are under pressure to answer this charge of nihilism (*Ibid.*, 9-10). In contrast to Franks, Emil Fackenheim has argued that, while it is reasonable to presume initially that Hegel fits nicely in a continuous development of post-Kantian thinkers, when we confront his philosophy we find that we cannot contain him within such limits. See Emil Fackenheim, *The Religious Dimension in Hegel's Thought*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1967.

428. *All or Nothing*, 8.

429. *All or Nothing*, ch. 1.

what has been, in his view, a confused reception of Hegel and other idealists in analytic philosophy.⁴³⁰ I will quote at length Franks' own summary of his view, since making it any more concise would misrepresent it:

The German idealists accept Jacobi's contention that it is Benedict Spinoza - not Leibniz or the pre-critical Kant - who has shown what would be required for a genuine justification that escapes the Agrippan trilemma. Thus they are all committed, in various ways, to the view that genuine justification can be achieved only within a system that meets two conditions: the *holistic condition* that every particular (object, fact, or judgement) be determined through its role within the whole and not through any intrinsic properties; and the *monistic condition* that the whole be grounded in an absolute principle that is immanent and not transcendent. Now, Jacobi himself thinks that, whereas the demand for such a system is the rigorously derived culmination of philosophical rationalism, the attempt to fulfill this demand must be disastrous not only in theory but also in practice. For such a system would not only be incapable of accounting for the individuality of persons and everyday objects, but it would also tend to annihilate the individuality of any person who actually came to believe it and live according to it. Rejecting Jacobi's fideist alternative, the German idealists face the problem of developing a version of Spinozism that escapes not only the Agrippan trilemma, but also what Jacobi calls nihilism. Hence, for the German idealists, it is indeed a matter of all or nothing.⁴³¹

I am in agreement with Franks about the relation between the Agrippan trilemma and the

430. The reception, he argues, is confused because the demand for systematicity appears to it as incomprehensible, and so this feature of German idealism is ignored in reconstructions of it. For Franks this is in part brought about by the conflicting readings of Kant given by German idealists and analytic philosophers. (Indeed, for Franks, it becomes important to differentiate between each of the following: Kant's own self-understanding, the idealists' actual reading of Kant, what Franks thinks *should be* the idealists' reading of Kant, and the analytic reception of Kant.) A proper assessment of the German idealist project requires understanding its context, which for Franks is their reading of Kant, whether this is the most charitable reading or not. See *All or Nothing*, Introduction, ch. 2 and ch. 3.

431. *Ibid.*, 9-10.

demand for systematicity, but I think he presents this in too narrow a context, though this comment needs some clarification: Franks' focus on the period from the publication of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* to 1800 allows for an insightful and detailed analysis, my reservation is in taking Hegel as *essentially*, or as *above all else*, a post-Kantian philosopher (where 'post-Kantian' has a philosophical and hermeneutical sense, not merely an historical sense). This narrow focus begins with an assumption that the German idealist demand for systematicity is a peculiar feature of it, not only *not* shared by analytic philosophy (a point on which I agree), but also, implicitly at least, not shared with ancient and mediaeval philosophy. It is this last assumption which I think is problematic. Franks is concerned with rendering a reading of German idealism that is not anachronistic, though reconstructive in a limited sense.⁴³² I would claim that the limitation of the demand for systematicity, as a response to skepticism, to the period of German idealism is itself anachronistic. In saying this I am not denying that the demand has an especially explicit emphasis in the German idealists (and that Franks is right to focus on this and highlight the relation of the understanding of systematicity in this period to Spinoza), only that it is not an eccentric or peculiar demand of the German idealists in relation to the history of philosophy more generally. I would suggest that what is striking is the setting aside of this demand in analytic philosophy (rather than the acceptance of it in German idealism), and that this distinguishes analytic philosophy from much of the history of philosophy, though this distinction is obscured by reconstructions of that history which are not sensitive to the

432. Franks describes his approach as "historically constrained reconstruction" (see *All or Nothing*, 6-8).

demand because of a lack of interest in it (at one extreme a blindness, at another extreme an antipathy towards it) or a lack of understanding of it. I have argued that we find the demand for systematicity in Plato (in the demand for a science of the Good which is comprehensive and final, so necessarily complete), and that Hegel sees this and affirms it.⁴³³ Julia Annas has noted the demand for systematicity in relation to Plato, but, interestingly, the conclusion she draws from this is that Plato (and the ancients generally) are more interested in the internal coherence of a theory than they are in its truth (the reverse being true, she assumes, for the analytic philosopher).⁴³⁴ Why would Annas disconnect the interest in systematicity from the interest in truth? I have presented a view of Plato's project in which these are connected as we rise above opinion to *episteme*, understood as an absolute (final) knowing which can no longer be conceived of as a theory (or as provisional in any sense) nor as subjective as opposed to objective. I would suggest that what is at work in Annas' account is the assumption that for 'us' such a rise is thought to be either impossible or incomprehensible. If that assumption is made, then disconnecting truth and systematicity comes more naturally (though needn't follow). For Hegel, system and truth are necessarily connected. This is not because he is a coherentist, if by that term we mean one who believes that the truth just is coherence or that coherence is constitutive of truth, it is because, as discussed above, the truth is the activity of its own self-

433. One can already see, in Plato's attention to the instability of opinion (and in the sophist's use of this), a sensitivity to skeptical challenges (before these are formally articulated in the Academy and later Hellenistic philosophy) which lead to the idea of philosophy as the ascent out of the cave to an unhypothetical knowing (which turns out to be, in Plato, an inward and upward ascent of the mind).

434. I have misplaced the source of Julia Annas' remarks.

actualization, and the system is the structure of that self-actualization (culminating in its own recollecting of that structure): "Free and genuine thought is inwardly *concrete*; hence it is *Idea*, and in all its universality it is *the Idea* or the *Absolute*. The science of it is essentially a *system*, since what is *concretely* true is so only in its inward self-unfolding and in taking and holding itself together in unity, i.e., as *totality*."⁴³⁵ In the remark to this paragraph (§14) Hegel wishes to contrast true system from a theory which is 'systematic' in the sense of (merely) internally consistent:

A content has its justification only as a moment of the whole, outside of which it is only an unfounded presupposition or a subjective certainty. ... It is erroneous to understand by 'system' a philosophy whose principle is restricted and [kept] distinct from other principles; on the contrary, it is the principle of genuine philosophy to contain all particular principles within itself.

Hegel interprets both Plato and Aristotle (wrongly in the eyes of many interpreters, rightly in the eyes of this one) to be systematic in content, though not form.⁴³⁶ And when Hegel comes to discuss Hellenistic skepticism (which he takes to be the most thorough in the entire history of philosophy) he does not present it as a challenge to Plato and Aristotle. Rather, he takes it to be a challenge to those interpreters of Plato and Aristotle who do not read them speculatively, which is to say who do not see the centrality of what Hegel will call the 'Idea' in their thought (I will say

435. EL, §14.

436. Cf. LHP, II, 117. An interesting difference between Hegel on the one hand and Plato and Aristotle on the other is that, while in each we could find philosophy conceived of as a journey to the truth, in Hegel the journey itself becomes systematic (though only in retrospect).

more about what he means by 'Idea' later). Hegel takes both Plato and Aristotle to be 'idealists' in the sense that their first principle is intelligible and has a priority to nature. This is not a common interpretation of either Plato or Aristotle today, but is not without its supporters. For instance, here is Jonathan Lear:

Both Aristotle and Kant believe that objects must conform to knowledge rather than *vice versa*. But for Kant this implies that the conforming objects of knowledge must be "appearances:" empirical knowledge is possible only if it is partially but significantly constituted by a contribution of the human mind. Thus it is very much our knowledge to which objects must conform. . . . For Aristotle, by contrast, objects must conform to our knowledge not because they must conform to the human mind, but because they must conform to God or Active Mind. Aristotle is thus, one might say, an objective idealist. He is an idealist in the sense that the order of the physical world is ultimately dependent on mind. Yet there is no trace of subjectivity in his idealism. Objects must conform to knowledge, but that does not reveal them to be constituted by any contribution from us. Aristotle and Kant differ not over whether objects must conform to mind, but over the location of the mind to which they are conforming. Since, for Aristotle, there is nothing distinctively human about the mind to which objects are conforming, there is no basis for saying that the essences we contemplate are mere appearances.⁴³⁷

That Hegel does not see skepticism as a challenge to Plato and Aristotle is interesting, and I would suggest that, to put it in a nutshell, this is because he sees skepticism as the *friend* of idealism, not a challenger to it. For Plato (to speak in the language of his images), skepticism is the moment which leads to the conversion of the prisoners in the cave. It is an important moment because it allows them to make the ascent out of the cave of their own accord (they do

437. Jonathan Lear, *Aristotle: the Desire to Understand* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 300.

not need to be lead). We might say that skepticism is the doorstep to the house which is philosophy. I will argue in my next chapter that Hegel takes a similar approach. Skepticism is used to 'get into' philosophy, but in addition what happens with Hegel is that skepticism is internalized as part of the way in which we move forward *within* philosophy.⁴³⁸ To explain this last point I will have to overstep my earlier claim about our not being in a position to characterize Hegel's dialectic formally (and make it seem that Hegel is proving me wrong). Here is Hegel giving one such (apparent, in my view) formalization in the context of the *Encyclopedia Logic*:

With regard to its form, the *logical* has three sides: (a) *the side of abstraction or of the understanding*, (b) *the dialectical or negatively rational side*. [and] (c) *the speculative or positively rational one* ... (a) Thinking as *understanding* stops short at the fixed determinacy and its distinctness vis-à-vis other determinacies; such a restricted abstraction counts for the understanding as one that subsists on its own account, and [simply] is ... (b) The *dialectical* moment is the self-sublation of these finite determinations on their own part, and their passing into their opposites. ... The dialectical, taken separately on its own by the understanding, constitutes *scepticism* ... (c) The *speculative* or *positively rational* apprehends the unity of the determinations in their opposition, the *affirmative* that is contained in their dissolution and in their transition. ... The dialectic has a *positive* result, because it has a *determinate content*, or because its result is truly not *empty*, *abstract nothing*, but the negation of *certain determinations*, which are contained in the result precisely because it is not an *immediate nothing*, but a result.⁴³⁹

438. It is because, in Hegel, skepticism is not simply answered, but taken up and put to use (and so affirmed in its own limited way as a necessary moment) that I claimed earlier that Hegel's taking on of the Platonic project is more basic than his desire to answer skepticism.

439. EL, §§79, 80 and R, 81 and R. Note that Hegel will sometimes speak of all three moments as 'the dialectic' (especially when speaking of the dialectic of reality no less than of thought) and at other times speak of the second moment above as 'the dialectic.' Further, his claim is that this is not some special method of philosophy, but the structure of thinking (and so of reality) itself: "The insight that the very nature of thinking is the dialectic, that,

In this Hegelian dialectic thinking produces discrete, finite determinations of thought which it takes to be 'stable' or self-identical on their own (in this mode, thinking is spoken of as the 'understanding'); dialectic reveals the breakdown of their self-identity or independence; the 'rational' or 'speculative' moment grasps their unity in their difference.⁴⁴⁰ The skeptical moment is present, not just at the doorstep to philosophy, but within it, bringing out what Hegel will call 'the ideality of the finite.'⁴⁴¹ I say that Hegel only *apparently* contradicts my claim that we cannot formalize the dialectic because the above text, and others like it, are in fact only inadequate descriptions given by one who has already traversed the dialectic.⁴⁴² They can only be this, for we have no reason to think the dialectic *must* have this form in principle. To see this, it is helpful to contrast the above schematic structure of the dialectic with the more familiar formal rules of

as understanding, it must fall into the negative of itself, into contradictions, is an aspect of capital importance in the Logic" (EL, §11 R) or "This dialectic, then, is not an *external* activity of subjective thought, but the *very soul* of the content which puts forth its branches and fruit organically" (PR, §31).

440. In abstraction this has little meaning. I will treat of one such 'movement' in treating Hegel's account of the free will in chapter 4.

441. In the context of the history of philosophy this means for Hegel that particular determinate positions do not stand independently of one another but are moments within the one development that is philosophy proper. More generally, Hegel speaks of the 'ideality' of the finite to refer to its lack of self-identity: the idea is that only what is fully self-determined is fully self-identical, a moment in an activity is what it is by virtue of being a moment in that activity, not in virtue of itself as independent. Hegel will speak of the 'ideal' as 'unreal' in the sense that on its own it is not actual.

442. For the sense of the inadequacy as description cf. Yirmiahu Yovel, "Hegel's Dictum that the Rational is Actual and the Actual is Rational: Its Ontological Content and Its Function in Discourse," in *The Hegel Myths and Legends*, ed. Jon Stewart (Evanston: Northwestern University Press: 1996), 26-41.

inference in deduction. There are two differences: we know these formal rules in advance of any particular deduction, and the content of the propositions involved in the deduction has no relevance to its validity - the deduction is valid or invalid on the basis of a form that is divorced from content. In contrast, if we can speak of 'validity' in the dialectic,⁴⁴³ then it is consequent on content (I will return to this briefly in my next chapter). But then, to know the description as fair, we need to know the entire content as it unfolds, hence this could only be a retrospective description of the dialectic. This is the sense in which I mean it is a mistake to think of it as a formalization of the dialectic. Another way to put this is that we have no reason in principle to believe, ahead of time, that the skeptical side (the 'negative moment' as Hegel would say) will be productive of *something* rather than *nothing*. We can only discover this (or not).

Skepticism is the friend of idealism because it reveals (Hegel thinks) the limitation of the understanding in grasping the truth, and this produces the movement that is speculative philosophy - Hegel's version of moving up the Platonic line.⁴⁴⁴ Hegel argues in the LHP that

443. To speak of 'validity' in Hegel's dialectic would mean something like 'if a move in the dialectic is 'true' in the sense of truly furthering the self-development of the Concept or truly being the articulation of that self-development.'

444. Kant is commonly taken to be a watershed in the history of philosophy, from which there is no turning back: philosophy has become critical with Kant (which is to say has exposed a certain naive dogmatism in past philosophers). But for Hegel (though he is thoroughly appreciative of Kant's critical turn), if we were to speak of any watershed after which philosophy must be critical, we would have to say that this watershed is Hellenistic skepticism, as paradigmatically expounded by Sextus Empiricus. But Hegel would add that this means there is no turning back to the 'understanding' as sufficient, and that in seeing that one knows oneself as already rising to the standpoint of 'reason' (and he would add that this rise to reason is present in Plato and Aristotle).

skepticism is in fact a minimalist form of dogmatism in that it begins with the assumption of the gap between knower and known, and then asks how we could ever know that the two were appropriately related. In this it is squarely within what Hegel terms 'representational' thinking (a thinking in which the subject represents in the mind what is - or it takes to be - the truth in the world. And Hegel accepts that skepticism wins the day if we remain caught in the opposition of subject and object.⁴⁴⁵ But, he adds, it is dogmatic to assume we must. What if rising to a unity of knower and known is possible? (Assuming this as actually possible would be equally dogmatic, but we needn't do that in order to explore the possibility). One enigmatic way he puts this is to ask: what if we are already on the side of the Absolute? If we discover through the dialectic that we *are*, then skepticism has lost its purchase on us. And if the retrospective description of the dialectic as Hegel gives it in the above quotation turns out to be a fair description, then we will know skepticism to have helped us on the journey to being the self-thinking of the truth (it will have helped us rise above the subject-object gap that is its own presupposition). Skepticism will then be known as philosophy's friend.

What the (Hellenistic) skeptic and Hegel (and Plato) have in common is a desire to be free.⁴⁴⁶ The skeptic is concerned not to assent to falsehood, because determining his rational will

445. Cf. Hegel's discussion of Academic skepticism in LHP, II, 316-319 and the Pyrrhonian skepticism of Sextus Empiricus in LHP, II, 328-331.

446. I take Sextus Empiricus to be paradigmatic of the skepticism of the Hellenistic period, as does Hegel. See *Outlines of Scepticism*, ed. J. Annas and J. Barnes (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 2000). It is important to note that Sextus describes the true skeptic as continuing to search for the truth (only the dogmatic skeptic would relinquish

according to what is false would be a form of unfreedom (Descartes gives a wonderful focus to this practical concern of Hellenistic skepticism in his hypothesis of the malicious demon and the question whether he could be free even under that hypothesis).⁴⁴⁷ At the most basic level, in Plato and Hegel, we can think of the desire to be free as moving us to a desire for the truth. Without that we would be content to remain in the cave. I will be focusing on this demand for thinking (as philosophy) to be free in the next chapter.

this search). Unless he discover that truth, the skeptic will only be (minimally) free in not assenting to falsehood. But, Sextus argues (or better, reports) in that minimal freedom *ataraxia* happens to come upon him, as if by chance.

447. René Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy with Selections from the Objections and Replies*, trans. John Cottingham (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), Meditation 1.

Chapter Three

Hegel's Invitation to Speculative Thinking in the Preface to the *Phenomenology of Spirit*

III.1 Introduction

In chapter two I gave an interpretation of Hegel's conception of philosophy at the macro-level. That interpretation has the limitation of being schematic, but the advantage (if it is a fair assessment) of orienting us to what Hegel says and why he says it in the way he does. In Plato's images, that schematic view presents philosophy as the whole movement of the ascent out of the cave or the rise up the line. It is a view from the top so to speak (or at least it assumes there is a 'top'). My contention there was that the language most appropriate to such a view (outside the speculative thinking which Hegel claims the *Phenomenology* and *Encyclopedia* to be the expression of) is theological. I presented two ideas as central to orienting ourselves to what speculative thinking is: God's complete free activity of going out and returning to Himself, and the unity of the infinite and the finite, such that in our thinking (which is our doing and knowing) we are that return.⁴⁴⁸ As this return, knowing has the structure of self-consciousness (of a subject knowing itself in its other) and as such is self-enclosed and so self-justifying (Hegel speaks of it as immediate and self-mediated respectively). If actual, this knowing would be concrete and

448. On our thinking as being practical and theoretical, as previously noted, cf. PR, §4A: the "distinction between thought and will is simply that between theoretical and practical attitudes. ... they are not two separate faculties; on the contrary, the will is a particular way of thinking - thinking translating itself into existence."

free; it would simply be the truth knowing the truth. There would be the distinction of knower and known, but no opposition, no gap, between knower and known. In this chapter I will be taking a slightly different approach, trying to give a view from the bottom, from the perspective of the person still inside the cave, to use that Platonic imagery. I have in mind the person who has picked up the *Phenomenology* and read the Preface in order to decide whether to buy the book (perhaps she read Robert Brandom's untimely book review and was intrigued).⁴⁴⁹ What I wish to understand is Hegel's specific form of invitation to us to enter into (or look on at) the dialectical movement of the *Phenomenology* and why we might accept that invitation. This will lead me at times to give a provisional, necessarily abstract, description of what the dialectic would be if accomplished (with important qualifications about any such abstract description of Hegel's dialectic which will come out in the discussion).

Part of understanding the nature of Hegel's invitation to us to think dialectically with him will require trying to make some sense of why Hegel argues the way he does, why he thinks philosophy must take the form of what he calls speculative thinking, for this is surely the biggest stumbling block that would keep a reader from continuing on past the Preface. The Preface to Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* both introduces the idea of speculative thinking and is informed

449. Robert Brandom, "Untimely Review of Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*," accessed, July 11, 2013, <http://www.pitt.edu/%7Ebrandom/index.html>. My focus in this chapter is the text of Hegel's Preface to the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, and I assume some familiarity (and frustration) with this in my reader, however, where particular ideas or terms are helpfully articulated in other texts, I will refer or cite these in the footnotes as an aid to understanding the dense and synoptic writing of the Preface.

by it. My goal is not to justify the method inherent in this idea, but I do hope to shed some further light on what it is and give some philosophical motivation for it. The question of justification is an important one but too large for me here. If what I have argued in the previous chapter is right, it will turn out to be impossible to justify Hegel's method independently of his system. And interestingly, if this is true then it is not a limitation, but a virtue of that system, because if it *were* possible to justify the method independently that would itself be a refutation of this system. It would be a refutation because it would show up the system as not self-contained and comprehensive (which is to say not self-justifying and infinite). It would mean the system rested on something external to it, hence something pre-philosophical. And it is essential to the system that it overcome all that is, or appears initially to be, pre-philosophical. As noted, this leads to a frustration in reading Hegel: he seems forever to be evading justification, forever promising an argument to come. Although this is a frustration that I (and I think any reader must) have, I will try to say something about why it is inevitable.

The recent interest among analytic philosophers in finding something interesting in Hegel begins almost universally with reconstructing Hegel's arguments and insights into categories and a form of arguing which are more familiar to us. I think this is a respectable and promising enterprise, but I do not want to assume too quickly, and perhaps dogmatically, that we have to do this. I have in mind a thought of Aristotle's that it is important to note the distinction between

what is most intelligible to us and what is most intelligible in itself.⁴⁵⁰ I don't want to lose what might turn out to be most intelligible in itself by too quickly demanding what is most intelligible to us. Another closely related distinction found in Aristotle is pertinent here, that between being on the way to the first principle and having a deductive science from it. The path on the way is aporetic. In Hegel's work we must distinguish between being on the way to the system and having the system. While on the way, full intelligibility and justification is on hold, we must follow out the process and see if it turns out to be intelligible and self-justifying. The difference in Hegel is that once the system emerges there is no turning around to have a demonstrative science from it. Once there, we realize that the process of getting there is what constitutes the systematic knowledge.

III.2 The Limits of Ordinary Argument

I will begin by trying to determine what is in Hegel's distinction between what he calls ratiocinative argument (*die rasonnierende Weise*) and speculative argument (*die spekulative Weise*).⁴⁵¹ For now we can think of the former simply as the kind of syllogistic reasoning that we

450. Aristotle, *Physics*, trans. R. P. Hardie and R. K. Gaye, in *The Basic works of Aristotle*, ed. R. McKeon (New York: Random House, 1941), Book *Alpha*, ch. i.

451. See PhG, §§59-66 in particular for this contrast. The context makes it clear that by '*Weise*' Hegel means 'way' or 'manner' in the sense of a 'method' of argument. Hegel refers to the terms of this opposition variously as '*das begreifende Denken*' (§59) and '*das rasonnierende Denken*' (§60), '*die spekulative und die rasonnierende Weise*' (§64). All German references are to G.W.F. Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, *Philosophische Bibliothek Band 414*, Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1988.

expect to find in a court room or a philosophical paper. It is an activity which Hegel associates with the understanding (*der Verstand*). Hegel repeatedly speaks in disparaging tones about the understanding and he is often thought to glibly reject the principle of identity and the law of non-contradiction. Certainly in some sense he will claim that the finite (to which the understanding is wedded) is not self-identical, that it is self-contradictory. To put this differently, in some sense the finite both is and is not itself. To use Hegel's technical term, he claims the finite has negativity within it.⁴⁵² We can understand this technical language in a preliminary manner if we

452. Recall that Hegel speaks of the finite as that which exists, but whose existence is not adequate to its concept. For example:

Finitude, according to this determination, consists in the fact that what something is *in itself* or in accordance with its concept is different in its existence [*Existenz*] or appearance from what it is *for itself*; thus, for example, *in itself* the abstract mutual externality of nature is space, but *for itself* it is time (PR, §10).

Hegel contrasts the finite thinking of the understanding with the infinite thinking of reason as follows:

we must distinguish *finite thinking*, the *thinking of mere* understanding, from the *infinite* thinking of *reason*. Taken in isolation, just as they are immediately given, the thought-determinations are *finite* determinations. But what is true is what is infinite within itself; it cannot be expressed and brought to consciousness through what is finite.

If we adhere to the modern notion that thinking is always restricted, then the expression 'infinite thinking' may appear quite astonishing. But, in fact, thinking is inwardly and essentially infinite. To put the point formally, 'finite' means whatever comes to an end, what *is*, but ceases to be where it connects with its other, and is thus restricted by it. Hence, the finite subsists in its relation to its other, which is its negation and presents itself as its limit. But thinking is at home with itself, it relates itself to itself, and is its own ob-ject. Insofar as my ob-ject is a thought, I am at home with myself. Thus the I, or thinking, is infinite because it is

take note, as previously discussed, that for Hegel it will turn out that what is actual is activity, not things and their properties.⁴⁵³ Activity is structured by an end. What an activity is, is its end, but while it is actualizing that it is not its end. The distance between the activity and its actualization is its 'negativity.' The most complete (actual) activity is one in which the end does not lie outside its process of actualization, but is the very activity itself. This is what ancient *theoria* is, and what Aristotle thinks God is (for Aristotle *theoria*, in the primary sense, just is God's life of thought thinking thought).⁴⁵⁴ In conjunction with criticizing the understanding Hegel claims that speculative thinking is the only adequate form in which the truth can be grasped (the truth, that is, not merely in the sense of the correct, but in the sense of what is fully actual).⁴⁵⁵ On the basis of this one might expect him to be offering some special mode of cognition as an alternative to the cognition accessible to, or possible for, the understanding. But he is no less critical of the assertion of a direct intuitive knowledge of the truth and he clearly demands that we must work towards a fully determinate grasp of the truth.⁴⁵⁶ In connection with this latter point, he asserts

related in thinking to an ob-ject that is itself. An ob-ject as such is an other, something negative that confronts me. But if thinking thinks itself, then it has an ob-ject that is at the same time not an ob-ject, i.e. an ob-ject that is sublated, ideal. Thus thinking as such, thinking in its purity, does not have any restriction within itself (EL, §28 A).

453. One might express this differently by saying that the category appropriate to grasping the actual is the category of activity. I say 'turn out' because for Hegel this must come as a discovery.

454. Cf. Aristotle, *Metaphysica*, Book *Lambda*, especially chapter vii (in conjunction with chapters vi, ix and x).

455. For this contrast cf. PhG, §§39-48 which discusses the ordinary opposition of true and false, and the nature of the proposition (as incapable of expressing the true), in contrast with speculative philosophy.

456. Cf., for example, §§6-10 and EL, §§61-78 (the latter text discusses the position of a

that the understanding must be given its due.⁴⁵⁷ It would be a mistake, then, to take Hegel simply to be opposing the activity of the understanding to the activity which is speculative thinking.⁴⁵⁸

A major task of the Preface, I think, is Hegel's attempt, in a schematic form, to introduce speculative thinking, not as destroying the understanding, but perfecting it. The Preface presents us with an idea, not an argument (the *Phenomenology* is to be that argument). That idea is the idea of speculative thinking. This point needs to be qualified in an important way. Strictly speaking the Preface cannot even present us with an adequate idea. This is a surprising aspect of Hegel's thought. An idea must have content. Now there is some content to the abstract, schematic idea of speculative thinking presented in the Preface, but this is not adequate to the actual idea, which Hegel terms the 'concrete idea.' Hence it would be a mistake to think that we know what speculative thinking is on the basis of the Preface, or indeed on the basis of anything less than the complete system. In part this inability to grasp the concrete idea immediately is because, if Hegel is right, form and content cannot be understood in isolation from each other: an adequate grasp of the proper form of grasping the truth entails a knowledge of the truth and *vice versa*. In part it is because, again if Hegel is right, the concrete idea is a result - the result of a dialectical argument - but is not comprehended separately from the process of the argument

pietistic opposition to discursive knowing).

457. See, for example, EL, §80 A.

458. From Hegel's final perspective this way of putting the matter will have to be qualified - they are not separate activities but rather the same activity at different stages of adequateness. We have already seen a limited version of this idea in the specific (dialectical) form of Hegel's criticism of the rationalists' proofs of the existence of God.

which produces that result.⁴⁵⁹ The stages in the argument are moments unified in an activity, and that entire content (with its form) *is* the concrete idea.⁴⁶⁰ This explains why Hegel is always uncomfortable writing prefaces and introductions. Doing so approaches the predicament of trying to explain to a person blind from birth what it is qualitatively like to see. This problem adds a further complexity (and frustration) in trying to follow Hegel's argument: we must work through to the complete system, not only for full justification, as mentioned above, but even for full intelligibility.⁴⁶¹

Keeping the above qualification in mind, as a first step in comprehending how speculative thinking is to perfect rather than destroy the understanding I will be arguing that for Hegel the attainment of speculative thinking as distinct from ratiocinative thinking does not rely on a simple rejection of the understanding but a rejection of a particular use of the understanding in philosophy.⁴⁶² In the ordinary use of the understanding, Hegel argues that we are inevitably

459. Cf. PhG, §§3, 5, 20. For example: "The True is the whole. But the whole is nothing other than the essence consummating itself through development" (PhG, §20).

460. I will return to the question of how we might understand form and content to be united in concrete thinking.

461. It is not inconsistent for Hegel to deny the possibility of explaining his work, yet go on to give a Preface anyway. Neither is doing so an instance of an author deconstructing his own thought. It is simply the result of holding that an adequate idea is a concrete idea. To use Hegel's technical terminology, any beginning has negativity within it, it is and is not what it is, just as the acorn is and is not an oak tree. A consequence of our not yet having an adequate idea of speculative thinking is that we cannot make a philosophical judgment about it, though we may be inclined to take it less or more seriously on the basis of our present presuppositions. It must then remain an assertion opposed to other assertions about the nature of truth and the form of grasping the truth.

462. If Hegel is right this will need some qualification for thinking will turn out to be, not an

caught up in attributing predicates to a subject. The example he gives in the Preface is the predication of being to God in the sentence 'God is being,' where one intends to express the essence of God.⁴⁶³ There is nothing wrong with this form of sentence in our ordinary practical life, but Hegel thinks it is not sufficient for philosophy. Why is this? His idea is that the content of what we are thinking is contained in the predicate, and that the subject is what remains beyond this content, it is what remains as yet *unthought*. Hegel's point is not that the predicate *successfully* expresses the content intended, but that whatever content there is in our thinking 'God is being' is to be found in the predicate.⁴⁶⁴ What we are *trying* to think is the concrete subject, but what we have actually thought is the predicate, which, in its distinction from the subject, is a mere abstraction (and so not fully adequate to what we are trying to think, which again is the concrete subject). It might seem as though Hegel retreats from the claim that the subject is without content when he accepts that we are right to hold on to the subject in our ordinary thinking (i.e. that we have reason to use the subject-predicate form outside of philosophy). But his explanation is that the use of this form is really an acknowledgment that we have not yet expressed the truth (i.e. it is the acknowledgment that being remains a lifeless abstraction which is not adequate to expressing what God is as living subject). Implicit in that acknowledgement is the demand that we express what God is fully. Hegel thinks it is the work

instrument which we put to use, but self-determining subject and substance itself.

463. PhG, §62.

464. It may turn out that the content of the predicate is much more slender than we had intended (Hegel opens the *Logic* arguing that this is indeed the case with the content of this particular predicate).

of philosophy to live up to that demand. If Hegel is right about this, and if speculative thinking does live up to that demand, then speculative thinking will turn out to be, not some idiosyncratic notion (as surely it must at first appear), but what ordinary thinking has always implicitly been striving for in its simplest desire to know.⁴⁶⁵

Hegel's term for the abstract thinking which is inadequate to philosophy is 'external reflection.' What Hegel means by this term can at times seem obscure, but I think its meaning turns out to be straightforward, it is just that Hegel uses it in a critical tone, and so we think it must mean something different from what he intends, because we are (or many of us are) accustomed to accepting that the content of our thought is limited to abstractions. Abstract thinking is external in the sense that it remains other than its object (the object being the subject of predication) and in the sense that it is the thinker who must join the abstractions together in the subject. In contrast, the idea of Hegel's speculative thinking is that determinations of thought unite themselves so as to be a subject, so that in the end we can say that it is the subject itself, not something external to it, which unites its determinations. The thinking of this self-determined unity is what concrete, rather than abstract, thinking would be.⁴⁶⁶ We might say this would be

465. This is why, as noted in the previous chapter, Hegel thinks it is important to realize that the common person and the speculative philosopher are closer to each other in their attitude towards grasping the truth than either is to the 'ratiocinative' philosopher. Cf. EL, §5, and §§1-18 generally for this idea.

466. As noted earlier, Hegel uses the term 'concrete' as a technical term, but one that is a natural development of our ordinary use of it as what is actual rather than abstract. What is special is not any meaning given to the term, but what Hegel argues is actual.

were complete, there would be no need of them. That complete knowledge would not be other than the divine self-thinking.

One might not think that there is anything deficient in the abstract ordinary use of the understanding, is that not just what the content of thought is, an abstraction? It is important, I think, to defer a judgment on this. It would be dogmatic to assume that the content of our thinking can be no more than an abstraction, and so we must see if Hegel shows us (in the *Phenomenology* and the *Encyclopedia*) a way to understand that it is not. Hegel levels two criticisms at abstract thinking which may simply be the limitations of any thinking, but may, on the other hand, turn out to be limitations of one use of the understanding.⁴⁶⁹ The first criticism is what I have just discussed, the problem Hegel sees in the subject - predicate form (where the subject, insofar as it is distinct from the predicates, remains as yet unthought). The second criticism has to do with a problem in the justification of the linking of subject and predicate. Hegel is skeptical of our finding isolated premises which are true and known to be true in a Cartesian manner and so he argues that we will inevitably be caught in an endless process of justification. We are not usually aware of this because we rely on pre-philosophical content in our philosophizing. This enables the regress of justification to come to a halt.⁴⁷⁰ Hegel claims in

469. It would be more accurate, though more obscure (from the perspective of the 'outside view' I am developing in this chapter), to speak of the 'nature' of the understanding rather than our 'use' of the understanding, and of that nature as revealing its own contradictoriness in a way which is productive of the dialectic which it - the understanding - truly is, or becomes.

470. It also allows it to begin in the first place, for it is our pre-philosophical representation of the subject which gives us something to link the predicates to. Characteristically, Hegel

the *Encyclopedia Logic*, for instance, that rationalist natural theology amounts to determining which predicates must be predicated of God, but that in the end their justification for the correctness of predication relies on their pre-philosophical religious representation of God. This representation might be right, but they can't know this until they are free of all that is pre-philosophical. Until they, and we, are free of all that is pre-philosophical, an element of dogmatism will remain in our thinking.

This latter problem is found more generally in the syllogistic reasoning found in ordinary argumentative (rather than speculative) philosophizing. A syllogism is only as good as its premises.⁴⁷¹ When I attempt to convince you of something through a syllogism, I must appeal to some common ground of belief. Without that, my premisses will have no purchase and you will only, at best, see the formal validity of my argument. We might happen, by chance, to have some common ground, but this alone is insufficient if what we desire is a knowledge of the truth, not mere persuasion. For such knowledge we must know that our common ground is true. Hegel, like Descartes, takes skepticism to be instructive, and to lead us to philosophy.⁴⁷² Unlike

does not *dismiss* the pre-philosophical, but he does demand its transformation such that it is known as within the philosophical. Cf. the section of WL titled "With What Must Science Begin?" (67-78).

471. Though of course it can be worse!

472. In Descartes' *Meditations*, skepticism leads us to the knowledge of the grounds of the possibility of knowledge, grounds which are self-evident truths. In Hegel, skepticism leads us to the doorstep of philosophy in the sense that it reveals the ratiocinative or argumentative method not to be adequate to philosophizing. This turns out not to be a merely negative discovery because of the dialectical nature of thought (and of the truth). What is different in Hegel is that skepticism is internalized into the dialectic, rather than

Descartes, he does not think we overcome skepticism in the discovery of isolated self-evident truths.⁴⁷³ Hence he thinks that the necessary subsequent justifying of the premises of any syllogism will either go on *ad infinitum* or come to an arbitrary stop:

... it is not difficult to see that the way of asserting a proposition, adducing reasons for it, and in the same way refuting its opposite by reasons, is not the form in which truth can appear. Truth is its own self-movement, whereas the method just described is the mode of cognition that remains external to its object. ... [Eventually this approach] refers the content back to some certainty or other, even if only to the sensation of the moment; and conviction is satisfied when a familiar resting-place is reached.⁴⁷⁴

Hegel does not dismiss syllogistic reasoning, but he wants us to be aware that if the Cartesian project of discovering isolated self-evident truths which ground all other truths is not successful, then such reasoning will be inevitably caught up in dogmatism unless grounded by another form of reasoning. One could avoid the charge of dogmatism by understanding all syllogistic reasoning to be tentative (if certain assumptions are granted, then something else follows, providing the argument is valid). This is surely what we do most of the time. But note that the distinction between stipulating the truth of a claim and arguing for the truth of a claim (a distinction which philosophers hold dear) becomes significantly blurred in this case: argument

being left behind (because overcome at the beginning), as in Descartes. Hence I called skepticism the friend of the (speculative) philosopher in the last chapter.

473. I think Hegel accepts that there is at least one self-evident certainty ('I think, I am'), but distinguishes this from truth.

474. PhG, §48. Cf. also §66: "... in ordinary proof ... the reasons given are themselves in need of further reason, and so on *ad infinitum*."

becomes simply a more extended form of stipulation.⁴⁷⁵

III.3 The Speculative Alternative

Does the inadequacy of syllogistic reasoning mean, then, that we must give up on argument? Both Descartes and Hegel think not. In relation to this I think there is a very helpful parallel to be drawn between Hegel's systematic argument and the first two meditations of Descartes' *Meditations on First Philosophy*.⁴⁷⁶ Descartes develops a corrosive skepticism in his first meditation. In this context there are no premisses to which he can turn to mount a syllogism, yet in the second meditation he *does* have an argument. In attempting to doubt his existence he discovers that he cannot. The way that Hegel would express Descartes' *cogito* is that thinking becomes aware of its own self-certainty.⁴⁷⁷ What is important for our purposes here is that there is a process which any rational person can enter into, and which Descartes thinks will end necessarily and universally in a determinate thought (the thinker's or thinking's self-

475. You stipulate a set of premises and show how a particular conclusion follows. But what are your premises to me? Related to this point, I think that an important aspect of Alvin Plantinga's work has been to bring out that what is a naturally or customarily acceptable starting point (a specific premise or a background set of theories) to one group of philosophers loosely united by a research project (or set of related research projects) is not necessarily an obvious or acceptable starting point for another group of philosophers.

476. René Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*, trans. John Cottingham, in *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*, vol. II, translators J. Cottingham, R. Stoothoff, and D. Murdoch (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984).

477. Cf. LHP, III, 226 ff. On Hegel's treatment of Descartes in his lectures see Floy Andrews, "Hegel's Presentation of the Cartesian Philosophy in the *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*," *Animus: the Canadian Journal of Philosophy and the Humanities* 5 (2000).

certainty). That is not a syllogism but it is an argument. Similarly, Hegel develops an equally corrosive (but much more extended) kind of skepticism: in the *Phenomenology* we come to see the inadequacy of successive forms of consciousness (taken as independent),⁴⁷⁸ in the *Logic* we come to see that our thinking is as yet still abstract, not fully actual, in the successive development of determinations of thought (until these are understood and thought through as moments of reason's self-determining activity). But as in Descartes (though in a very different way) this skepticism is productive. That it *can* be productive depends on the central idea of determinate negation in Hegel's dialectic. The Preface only touches on this in passing, contrasting it to the simple negation of syllogistic argumentation.⁴⁷⁹ I will not develop this idea here. What I want to bring attention to is the fact that, as in Descartes, so in Hegel, we have here an argument, though not a syllogistic one.⁴⁸⁰ I think it is more difficult to recognize it as an argument only because it is a massively extended argument. We do not have a stable resting place in the Cartesian philosophy until we come to the *cogito*; in Hegel we do not come to a

478. They are inadequate to what they are trying to be, which is knowledge (which in turn is absolute knowing), or so Hegel argues.

479. Cf. PhG, §59. In syllogistic argumentation a proposition is either true or false. Hegel argues that the simple negation of this method (the process of determining a proposition to be false) leaves us empty-handed. This is, I think, often over-stated by him. For instance, we might have reason to think that one or another proposition must be true, and so determining one to be false would leave us with the truth of the other. However, I think we can see that Hegel's idea is in general reasonable, for he would ask us what the justification is for asserting the original disjunction in the above case. In contrast, Hegel's idea of determinate negation is that the inadequacy of some determination of thought is understood via another positive determination. In this way the negation has content.

480. Whether or not it is in the end a successful argument is a secondary question in relation to our purposes here, though it is obviously an important one.

stable resting place until the entire system is worked out. Part of what I am suggesting here is that Hegel, contrary to what we might think on first reading his work, does not relax standards of clarity and rigor, but rather demands more of each than we are accustomed to demanding. In contrast to Hegel's approach, we normally gain seeming clarity and rigor by pushing the difficult questions of ultimate justification back outside our arguments.⁴⁸¹

Hegel's critical attitude towards the abstract and argumentative aspects of the ordinary use of the understanding leads us to ask two questions: what would a thinking which is concrete and free of the pre-philosophical look like? And what is the form of Hegel's own argument? As I mentioned above and will return to below, these two questions cannot be fully disengaged from one another in Hegel's work. In the Preface Hegel speaks of the speculative proposition or sentence.⁴⁸² Although this is Hegel's term, he does not use it elsewhere as a technical term (either in the *Phenomenology* which was written before the Preface or in the *Encyclopedia* which was written after it) and I think it is misleading because we inevitably think of propositions as atomic and stable. I think it is truer to his meaning simply to speak of speculative thinking. If we take the sentence 'God is being' as an example, the idea is that if we only assert what we actually grasp, then the normal subject 'God' will drop out and we will simply be left with the predicate 'being.' Hegel is not denying that we may have a very rich common sense representation of God,

481. Less obviously, we may even push ultimate questions of meaning outside our arguments (as I discussed with the meaning of 'supervenience' in the last chapter).

482. §§59 through 66 of the Preface to the PhG are particularly relevant here.

but he *is* denying that we have a *philosophical* grasp of this outside the predicate. This is an interesting example, because it is precisely where his *Logic* begins. The argument of that work is that in simply thinking being we will be rationally compelled to think a succession of further determinations of thought. Each, out of itself, calls forth another. That is, if the argument is successful, it is not we who link the successive determinations on some basis independent of them but the determinations which do this themselves - it is not we who are dialectical but the determinations themselves which are. For this reason Hegel thinks that *our* task is to give ourselves over to the matter at hand. This is not to be thought of as naively accepting an external authority. For Hegel it means following the universal and necessary movement of thought itself. This kind of demand is similar to the insight of the empiricist, in conscious opposition to the rationalist, that we must look to nature to see what it tells us, rather than imposing our ideas on it. Hegel thinks that if we do give ourselves over to the matter at hand we will find in the end that philosophy is not a tool which we use to discern the truth, but rather is the truth itself possessing us.⁴⁸³

I think it is a mistake for commentators to think of the speculative sentence or proposition as a short-lived doctrine appearing in the Preface (written after the *Phenomenology*) and disappearing by the time the *Logic* is written.⁴⁸⁴ As I note above, I think Hegel's use of

483. On this idea see EL, §§19-25.

484. Peter Gilgen, for example, takes this approach (unpublished paper, 'Speculative Sentences') as does Klaus Düsing in "Syllogistik und Dialektik in Hegels spekulativer Logik," in *Hegels Wissenschaft der Logik: Formation und Rekonstruktion*, ed. D. Henrich (Stuttgart: Klett-

'*speculativer Satz*' is easily misunderstood (Hegel also uses the term '*philosophischer Satz*' interchangeably with this.⁴⁸⁵ He is not asserting some special kind of proposition, which is why we do not find any such propositions in the *Phenomenology* or the *Logic*.⁴⁸⁶ What he is asserting is that there is a speculative reading versus a non-speculative reading of a sentence such as 'God is being.' (He is clearer about this at §66 where the focus is on the comprehension versus external form of sentences). To claim that there can be a speculative reading of a proposition such as 'God is being' is not the same as claiming that speculative content can be adequately expressed in the form of a proposition. The speculative reading of a proposition in part breaks down its fixity. On this point I agree with Yirmiahu Yovel who argues that speculative content cannot be expressed in a proposition, at most a proposition could serve at the end of an argument as "an abbreviated heading that summarizes a speculative process."⁴⁸⁷ In using the term

Cotta, 1986), 21.

485. Cf. §61.

486. For this idea cf. Klaus Düsing, "*Syllogistik und Dialektik in Hegels spekulativer Logik*," 20 - 21. Düsing argues that a speculative proposition is one in which the essence or substance of a subject is predicated of it as opposed to ordinary propositions which involve the predication of inessential attributes. Chong-Fuk Lau has argued that Düsing's thesis is historically unlikely (given Hegel's otherwise consistently dismissive comments on the form of the proposition) and theoretically unsatisfactory. Lau suggests three ways in which it would be theoretically unsatisfactory: 1) such a proposition would simply state the identity between two singular terms, 2) the difference between subject and predicate would be suppressed, and 3) the speculative proposition would remain opposed to the non-speculative or ordinary proposition, and so would be limited in a problematic way. (I would say: it does not reveal the transformation of the non-speculative proposition into the dialectical form which is speculative thinking.) See Chong-Fuk Lau, "Language and Metaphysics: the Dialectics of Hegel's Speculative Proposition," in *Hegel and Language*, ed. Jere O'Neill Surber (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2006), 61-2.

487. Yirmiahu Yovel, *Hegel's Preface to the Phenomenology of Spirit* (Princeton: Princeton University Press: 2005), 184.

'speculative proposition' Hegel, in Yovel's words, "does not intend to establish a new, presumably dialectical form of discourse, but to indicate the collapse of the usual predicative sentence as a philosophical instrument. Proper philosophical discourse must consist in a whole system of sentences, some of which are contradictory, whose mutual relationships are supposed to express the inner movement of the Concept."⁴⁸⁸ The difficulty which Hegel sees is that we must use language, and our language has a form which lends itself to the non-speculative reading. Philosophy appears to do violence to it (standing it on its head) in comprehending the above sentence, for example, as expressing or grasping no more than 'being.'⁴⁸⁹ The form of Hegel's writing is informed by this. If we think the predicate without reference to a subject, it becomes misleading to speak of a 'predicate' (since this has a built-in reference to a subject). Thus Hegel speaks simply of 'determinations of thought.' Further, more generally, his argument remains steadfastly with these determinations of thought: in the *Phenomenology*, for instance, we do not look on at an individual who *has* a particular form of consciousness, as if that form were a property of a thing, we simply find the forms of consciousness themselves. Hegel's idea is that in the end we will come to the realization that what is actual is the activity of knowing. This is the truth knowing itself. Hegel drops the grammatical subject of predication, but he does not

488. *Ibid.*, 183-4.

489. Cf. PhG, §26: "When natural consciousness entrusts itself straightway to Science, it makes an attempt, induced by it knows not what, to walk on its head too, just this once; the compulsion to assume this unwonted posture and to go about in it is a violence it is expected to do to itself, all unprepared and seemingly without necessity," and Hans-Georg Gadamer's commentary on this passage in "Hegel's 'Inverted World'," in *Hegel's Dialectic: Five Hermeneutical Studies* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976), 54-74.

drop the actual subject, which emerges out of the determinations of thought.

I said above that if the argument is successful our task becomes that of giving ourselves over to the matter at hand. This is a big 'if.' There are three crucial questions which immediately arise. First, how is the dialectical process able to begin? Is not any starting point a presumption itself? If it is, is the pre-philosophical not unavoidable? Second, how could we understand one determination or moment in the process determining the appearance of another? This is to ask how there is movement in thought. Answering this question would require developing Hegel's idea of the negativity of the finite and the closely related idea of determinate negation. And third, how could we understand the distinct moments of the process to be necessary, such that their unity is, as Hegel will eventually claim, one life, the life of what he calls the Concept (what in religious language is called God)? I argued in the last chapter that we cannot formalize the dialectic. We *can* give some abstract characterizations, as Hegel does in the *Encyclopedia Logic*, (§79 ff.), quoted at length the end of the last chapter and here abbreviated as follows: "With regard to its form, the *logical* has three sides: (a) *the side of abstraction or of the understanding*, (b) *the dialectical or negatively rational side*. [and] (c) *the speculative or positively rational one*." But to understand how this could be the case we must look to see if it is a fair characterization in any particular movement of the dialectic (to assume or demand that its form holds priori to any particular movement would be disingenuous - this (or just over zealousness) is just what we suspect of Hegel when we come to a point where some 'necessity' is claimed in the movement of the argument which we do not see). In my final chapter I will articulate my

understanding of how this dialectic is working at one specific point in the movement of the *Encyclopedia* (or more precisely, in the elaboration of one part of the *Encyclopedia* in the *Philosophy of Right*).

What it would be to have a concrete thinking rather than an abstract external reflection would be for the dialectical process as a whole to reveal itself to be systematic or complete such that there is no subject beyond the unity of the determinations of thought. One would then be thinking the actual, not just thinking about it. Of course the Preface to the *Phenomenology* cannot convince us that this will happen, it can only be an invitation to try. In this, I think it is like the opening of Descartes' *Meditations*. If we have come to doubt as deeply as Descartes has, then we have no stable and common ground from which he could argue that we should accept a particular claim. Descartes cannot offer us a syllogism. But he can invite us to begin a thinking process in which we may (and he thinks we will necessarily) make a discovery, in this case the 'I think, I am.' So too Hegel is inviting us simply to think being in the *Logic* or look on at consciousness in the *Phenomenology* and see what happens. If it turns out that there is a dialectical development which results, then it makes sense to speak of the predicates (or better, determinations of thought) determining themselves, and so of the subject as being found in them, not separate from them. That is because there would be nothing but the content of the predicates moving the development. If there is a continued sense in speaking of an underlying subject of the predicates then it is as the unity of the dialectical process itself.

Such a dialectical development would be a thinking in which form and content are not divorced as in the ordinary syllogism. In the ordinary syllogism logical form, independent of content, is what links one proposition or set of propositions with another. Hegel's idea is that in speculative thinking it is the specific content of a determination which achieves this. If we see necessity in this then it is right to call it logical.⁴⁹⁰ The philosopher's role in this is simply to look on, or, we might say, simply to follow where reason leads.

Following Hegel where he thinks we are indeed lead turns out to be particularly difficult for two reasons, based on what I have just said: the first is that we find ourselves swimming in a world of universals without a familiar concrete subject to tie them down. The second is that the familiar fixity of normal syllogistic reasoning is broken down. It is of the utmost importance in normal syllogisms that we have distinct premises which remain stable. If Hegel is right, however, when we think philosophically (as opposed to dogmatically) we find no true stability until we have the unity of the whole process.⁴⁹¹ I think it would be true to say that for Hegel we

490. If we take the logical to be the universal and necessary linking of thoughts, then in ordinary syllogisms, the logical is formal (it is not dependent on the content of the propositions). If thought is dialectical in Hegel's sense then the logical is not formal: logic and content are not divorced, a particular determinant content links itself to another particular determinate content.

491. On the basis of this Hegel criticizes the ordinary use of the understanding for assuming that determinations of thought are fixed. I do not discuss the criticism of this assumption in this chapter, for it only makes sense retrospectively from the conclusion that thought and reality are indeed dialectical. We could put the resulting difficulty in following Hegel's train of thought thus: without a subject or referent tying it down the meaning of what he is saying is often illusive and without the syllogistic form there is always the suspicion that he is not playing fair.

do not have a concrete thought until we have that unity. And until we have that unity the process will appear as an exhausting way of despair. Hegel speaks of the *Phenomenology* in this way but I think it is equally true of the *Logic* and indeed of the entire 'system.' This explains why it is not merely a rhetorical ploy or laziness on his part to constantly refer to the system as a whole for justification. (That does not make it any less frustrating for us, but I am arguing that we can see that it is well-motivated.) If Hegel is correct about the limitations of the abstract 'use' of the understanding and about dialectical thinking as the only possible form of grasping the truth, then he cannot turn to isolated propositions or determinations of thought for justification (and we cannot find them for him). If justification is to be found, it will be self-justification, and it will be the self-justification of the system as a whole. Only if we discover this to be true will we be free from the pre-philosophical. Again Descartes is helpful here in understanding Hegel's approach: at a certain point Descartes must simply say to us: 'think through the *cogito* for yourself' (he cannot give us justification for this in advance), so too Hegel must refer to the (or his)⁴⁹² system and say to us: 'think it through.' In each case it does not make sense to seek or demand some alternate ground of justification.⁴⁹³ This explains Hegel's admonition not to mix

492. If Hegel is right then the system is just philosophy itself, and so not 'his.'

493. This explains, I think, a tendency found in some Hegelian commentators on Hegel to refer to the argument of his work as something accomplished, rather than giving us independent grounds for accepting particular claims. This can appear to be passing the buck, but it has, if I am right, a properly philosophical motivation. Such commentators could argue conditionally that one should, given one's own presuppositions, accept a claim of Hegel's, find Hegel's approach compelling, etc., but for full justification they must refer to the systematic working out of the dialectical process. One such commentator is found in Quentin Lauer, *A Reading of Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*, 2nd edition (New York: Fordham University Press, 1993, reprinted 2002).

the two forms of argument, argumentative and speculative.⁴⁹⁴ But it is important not to misunderstand this admonition. Hegel is not banishing syllogism from philosophical discussion. Throughout Hegel's work we find reasoning from ground to consequent, and this could be re-constructed in the form of a syllogism. His point in warning us not to mix the two forms of argument is a point about justification. Our habit is to use syllogisms to offer justification, as if this could be done piecemeal and with fixed determinations of thought. But if Hegel is right, only the dialectical form of argument will be successful in establishing ultimate justification, so any syllogistic reasoning must be understood as lying within this more fundamental all-encompassing form of reasoning.⁴⁹⁵

III.4 Some Remarks on the Speculative Alternative

We might reasonably see two problems with an invitation to think through his system, given that it is so extensive and difficult. First, what would bring us to take it seriously in the first place, and second, are we not being asked to take on a kind of uncritical naivete in giving ourselves over to its content? The quick answer to the first question is that skepticism is the natural entry into the system but I will return to some further thoughts about other reasons to be

494. PhG, §64.

495. This is a reason for making a distinction (which Hegel does not himself make explicitly as far as I am aware) between syllogistic reasoning and ratiocinative or argumentative philosophizing: the latter (in Hegel's use of term) is syllogistic reasoning plus the assumption that this is the appropriate or only form of justification.

interested in it at the end of the paper. But first I would like to respond to the second concern. I think it is important to see that the invitation to think through the system is not a call to think along with Hegel in a vacuum, though it may appear at first to be this, since he does not argue in a way we are accustomed to. We are accustomed to philosophical views being defended piecemeal, and so expect philosophers defending a theory or proposition to take into account the relevant alternative theories or propositions in a direct way.⁴⁹⁶ This is not Hegel's approach, for good reason, but he does eventually have to respond to other views. What is different is that this response is dialectical. That is, Hegel's appropriate response (the kind of response appropriate to his method) is his history of philosophy.⁴⁹⁷

Hegel's history of philosophy is an argument that philosophy is one activity, not simply a collection of opposing opinions, and that the different systems found in its history (each with its determinate principle) gradually reveal the truth. In that history the stages reveal their own negativity just as the forms of consciousness do in the *Phenomenology* and this is productive because, Hegel argues, we discover a connected series of determinate negations and thus a

496. The determination of relevance is of course a vexed matter: just how proximal to our own do they need to be (in terms of the questions they are responding to and the form of answer assumed to be acceptable)? In Carnap's rational reconstruction of science we find no developed counter-argument to Leibniz etc..

497. The opening comments of the Preface rely on this view of the history of philosophy. It is the reason Hegel gives for not comparing and contrasting his aims in the *Phenomenology* with those of other philosophers and scholars, as one might expect him to do as a way of introducing and clarifying his project (§2-3).

unified activity.⁴⁹⁸ The systems reveal a *logical* movement and so Hegel's history is not to be confused with a merely descriptive history of ideas and intellectual influences.⁴⁹⁹ If Hegel's argument is successful it reveals each philosophical system to be necessary to a grasp of the truth but not adequate to the complete grasp of it. The systems are then not false, yet not true (since each is not fully adequate on its own). It is tempting to use the logic of part and whole (each system is true but not the whole truth) but the image of part and whole is insufficient: parts are building blocks which can be independent (and be fully understood in their independence) and which, in the resulting whole, remain what they were before making up a whole. In Hegel's understanding of the history of philosophy what might be taken to be parts are more like the moments in a dance which disappear, and yet there is no dance distinct from them. Hegel's history of philosophy ends with Hegel, as Aristotle's does with Aristotle.⁵⁰⁰ This is not arrogance. Every philosopher who defends his position against others, and thinks he has done so sufficiently 'ends' with his own position. That is inevitable and proper to a good argument. What adds complexity to Hegel's position is that it is not intended to be a position opposed to others but unifying of them. Likewise the Hegelian apologist will answer his opponent, not by opposing one syllogism with another, but by acting as a midwife, encouraging his opponent to enter into a

498. For Hegel's own abstract statement of this cf. Introduction, HP.

499. The temporal and logical order of systems need not be identical, think of a philosopher working up a paper whose ideas and arguments come to her in a certain temporal order which may not reflect the final compelling logical order. Nevertheless, that logical order is what was moving her to think of the ideas, if she is moved by the demand for a unified, coherent argument.

500. Cf. Book *Alpha* of the *Metaphysics*, for example.

dialectical process of self-critique. This, of course, can appear pretentious or arrogant, but it is entirely appropriate to, and necessitated by, Hegel's speculative method of philosophizing. Terry Pinkard gives an anecdote which illustrates Hegel's attitude (which I am here claiming is necessitated by his view of the history of philosophy):

In 1822 a Hamburg hat maker, Edouard Duboc, wrote Hegel a letter requesting some help. An amateur reader of recent philosophy, he had started with Kant but was finding Hegel's work hard to understand. Citing the Scottish realist Dugald Stewart in English ('knowledge nowise constitutes these truths, which are its objects'), Duboc explained to Hegel that as he understood things, 'being is - represented or not - true in itself; it does not entirely presuppose representation in order to be what it is,' and he wanted to know whether Hegel agreed with what seemed to him like just common sense. Hegel replied to Duboc, 'I am not opposed to the content of Reinholdian, Scottish, etc. philosophies; rather I find myself outside all such standpoints,' noting that he parted company with such realists only when they claim that such common-sense realism is the 'highest and final standpoint.'⁵⁰¹

Let me return to the first concern, which was why we might take Hegel's system with its peculiar approach seriously at all. I have argued that for Hegel, in order to think philosophically, we must limit ourselves to what is thought, without adding a reference to the as-yet-unthought, for the latter is only possible through a reliance on pre-philosophical representations. This is to demand a pure thinking. Hegel thinks that the result of giving ourselves over to the content being thought will be a discovery of a dialectical process, and that the final result is that we will

501. Terry Pinkard, "Inside, Outside and Forms of Life: Hegel and Wittgenstein," appeared as "*Innen, Außen, und Lebensformen: Hegel und Wittgenstein*," in Michael Quante and Christoph Halbig (eds.), *Hegels Erbe* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 2004), trans. Terry Pinkard, in personal webpage link, accessed, July 11, 2013.

come to see that we are not other than self-determining reason coming to know itself (in its determining of itself). If my interpretation in chapter two is correct, this dialectical process is like a Neoplatonic descent and return but without the idea of a principle which is fully actual prior to the descent and return. Hegel's 'reason' actualizes itself in its movement. It is also like the ancient idea of philosophy as a participation in the divine thinking, but again without the idea of an actual divine thinking prior to and independent of this participation. Hegel says: "In my view, which can be justified only by the exposition of the system itself, everything turns on grasping and expressing the True, not only as *Substance*, but equally as *Subject*."⁵⁰² The truth is substance in that it is self-identical and actual, and it is subject because what is actual, reason, is self-determining (and on account of this should be thought of as a self-determining life). As strange as it sounds, grasping the truth would then be the truth grasping the truth.

This is a very grand view of what philosophy is. I am not suggesting that we have any grounds yet to have confidence that Hegel can get us where he thinks he can (or more precisely where he thinks we will get to on our own, if we only let go of our pre-philosophical commitments). However, I would like to say something about why he might even think we should start along the road that he thinks will end there. In this regard I think it is important to see that Hegel is determined to have more than a merely external reflection. It is striking that in his work, while we have an abundance of perceptive analyses of concrete aspects of life, such as

502. PhG, §17.

of marriage in the *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, he does not give us images in order to help us follow his argument. This lack of images is not due to any lack of interest on Hegel's part in the concrete. Hegel is determined not to lose hold of the concrete by entering into a realm of abstractions, though ironically this is precisely what seems to happen all the time. What then is the reason he shuns images? In the Preface he refers to the great Platonic myths as scientifically useless (§71). This is a bit shocking to any of us who hold those myths dear! Part of Hegel's point is that Plato must resort to images when he does not yet have a satisfactory (in Hegel's terms, a scientific) grasp of the matter at hand. But this is not the whole story. The Platonic images are immensely helpful because they orient us to the general project or the general sense of an answer or the approach to finding an answer. They help us to keep from getting lost in long and convoluted arguments. I have argued that if we were to come up with images to play this role in Hegel, they would have to be the central images of the Christian religion. And indeed it is quite common (and surely surprising for a first-time reader) for Hegel to give us such images in the introductory sections of his works - this is particularly true of the *Logic* and the *Encyclopedia Logic*.⁵⁰³ So why does Hegel not make use of such images within the body of his argument? It is not, as Bertrand Russell claimed, that Hegel's work is just religion hiding in the guise of philosophy.⁵⁰⁴ It is not that he purposely withholds those images to give a pretense of independent philosophizing. Rather, Hegel sees a problem in any image (and

503. If one asked someone to read those in isolation without knowing their context it would be reasonable for that person to assume this was the introduction to a theological text.

504. I.e. Hegel is not hiding theological dogma behind abstractions.

more generally in any representational thinking). The problem is that the image itself can become a criterion for us, so that, rather than following reason where it leads, we turn back to the image to guide our understanding of, and judgment about, an argument. In so doing we slip into a reliance on the pre-philosophical.⁵⁰⁵

Hegel is responding to a demand that philosophy be free of anything pre-philosophical. This is a demand that it not be dogmatic in any form and so be immune to all skeptical challenges. Part of Hegel's response is the idea that we as philosophers simply give ourselves over to the matter at hand.⁵⁰⁶ This will turn out to be fruitful only if the matter at hand turns out to be rational through and through.⁵⁰⁷ To the extent that the Preface claims that speculative thinking is the proper form of philosophical thinking, it must assume the conclusion that reason

505. For a complementary discussion of the reason for the lack of the use of image in Hegel's argument see Will Dudley, 'Telling the Truth: Systematic Philosophy and the *Aufhebung* of Poetic and Religious Language,' in *Hegel and Language*, ed. Jere O'Neill Surber (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2006), 127-141. Dudley argues that for Hegel the immediate image of art and the symbolic image of religion inevitably say too much and too little at the same time. In particular, Dudley argues, religious symbolic image expresses a content which at the same time is presented as being beyond comprehension (*ibid.*, 133-136).

506. Cf. "Scientific cognition ... demands surrender to the life of the object," PhG, §53.

507. This idea is expressed most famously in the dictum previously cited from the Preface to the *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*: "What is rational is actual; and what is actual is rational" (p.20). For perceptive commentaries on this see Michael Hardimon, *Hegel's Social Philosophy: The Project of Reconciliation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 52-83, along with Emil Fackenheim, 'On the Actuality of the Rational and the Rationality of the Actual,' *The Review of Metaphysics*, 23, no. 4 (June, 1970), 690-698 and Yirmiahu Yovel, "Hegel's Dictum that the Rational is Actual and the Actual is Rational: Its Ontological Content and Its Function in Discourse," in *The Hegel Myths and Legends*, ed. Jon Stewart (Evanston: Northwestern University Press: 1996), 26-41.

is the actual. The extent to which there is any defense of it at all in the Preface lies in the argument that it would be just as dogmatic to dismiss it from the start as it would be to accept it. Hegel usually describes the dismissal of it as the view that reason is an instrument used by us to grasp what is other than us, or in the case of skepticism, that the skeptic dogmatically assumes a self distinct from cognition (the self which remains free in withholding assent). In contrast, Hegel's assumption that philosophy's task is to comprehend reason as actual (equally dogmatic in isolation from the system) is expressed in the conjunction of two thoughts: the religious consciousness is right to think of the truth as God and Hegel is right to claim that we can know God (though for Hegel this expression remains inadequate insofar as it is in the form of representational thought). The latter is an extraordinary claim, especially given Hegel's insistence that it is the ordinary understanding - raised to speculative thinking - which is capable of this in a completely exoteric science (not the ordinary use of the understanding for sure, but the ordinary understanding none the less). Part of the concluding statement of Hegel's 1824 lecture series on the philosophy of religion gives a very clear formulation of Hegel's view about the relation of philosophy to religion on the one hand, and to Enlightenment on the other (which for our purposes can be taken as a paradigm of the normal use of the understanding). It is worth quoting at length:

Philosophy stands between two opposing views. On the one hand it seems to be opposed to the church; because it conceptualizes, it shares with the development of culture and with reflection the refusal to remain bound to the form of representation. Instead, it [advances to the point] of comprehending [the truth] in thoughts; and in the process it also recognizes the necessity of the form of representation. But the concept is the higher form because, even while encompassing the various [representational] forms and acknowledging their

legitimacy, it has its own content. So this opposition [to the church] is only a formal one. The other opposition is between philosophy and the Enlightenment. Philosophy is opposed to the [attitude of] indifference toward the content, it is opposed to mere opinion, to the despair involved in its renunciation of the truth, and to the view that it does not matter what content is intended. The goal of philosophy is the cognition of the truth - the cognition of God because he is the absolute truth. In that context nothing else is worth troubling about compared with God and his explication. Philosophy knows God essentially as concrete, as the spiritual, realized universality that is not jealous but communicates itself. Even light communicates itself. Whoever says that God cannot be cognized is saying that God is jealous, and is not making a serious effort to achieve cognition when he speaks of God. The Enlightenment - that vanity of the understanding - is the most vehement opponent of philosophy. It takes it very ill when philosophy demonstrates the rational content in the Christian religion, when it shows that the witness of the Spirit, the truth in the most all-embracing sense of the term, is deposited in religion.⁵⁰⁸

It is not a fault of the Preface to make the assumption that what is actual is reason. It is the job of the *Phenomenology*, not the Preface, to bring this out (or more precisely in Hegel's terms the *Phenomenology* is to be reason's revelation of this to itself). And if Hegel is right we do not need to be aware of this outcome in order to have the immanent critique and so dialectical movement of the *Phenomenology*. However, our sympathy or lack of sympathy with the idea that the rational is actual (and the actual rational) will determine our patience with the form of his extended argument. I have been arguing that Hegel develops the idea of the autonomy of reason that is present in Descartes (and other early modern thinkers) - an idea which Hegel takes to be at the center of the Reformation - and the ancient idea of *theoria* found in Plato (and Aristotle).⁵⁰⁹ Following Descartes it is difficult to see how we could start anywhere except with

508. LPR, 246-7.

consciousness, and it is difficult to see how we could understand there to be any higher authority than reason and with this a demand for a presuppositionless thinking. In Plato we begin thinking about ordinary sensible objects like sticks and stones, or about matters of immediate concern such as a particular virtue, and are led to think of the forms and eventually demand a science of the Good, the unhypothetical knowing at the top of the Platonic line. In Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, *theoria* is presented as the highest, freest, and most complete activity. Aristotle says it is an activity which is divine in two ways: it has God as its object (or at least one of its objects) and God above all is in possession of this science.⁵¹⁰ By the end of the *Metaphysics* the unmoved mover is introduced as that complete actuality which is thought thinking thought, moving the world as its end.⁵¹¹ In both Plato and Aristotle how such *theoria* would be possible and what it would look like are very difficult to determine. Hegel's idea of a speculative thinking which gives itself over to the matter at hand and finds in this the actuality of reason is his development of these earlier projects. A sympathy with these earlier philosophers, then, may be reason enough to be patient with Hegel.

509. In this I have not been suggesting, as some would, that Hegel is reverting to a kind of pre-critical (or pre-Kantian) Metaphysics. Hegel not only is concerned to answer all skeptical challenges (ancient and modern), he thinks these are very important for there to be philosophy at all: as noted, we see this in his internalization of skepticism to his method.

510. Aristotle, *Metaphysica*, Book *Alpha*, ch. ii.

511. Aristotle, *Metaphysica*, Book *Lambda*, ch. vii.

Chapter Four

Hegel's Account of the Family as an Ethical Institution

in the *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*

IV.1 Introduction

Hegel claims that in and through the family freedom is made actual.⁵¹² This is a strong claim to make about an institution which, on the one hand, as a social creation, we might reasonably judge to have been a source of oppression historically, especially for women, and on the other hand, as a biological unit, we might view as being without any special normative significance. It is not immediately obvious that Hegel's account is not fraught with problems related to both of these concerns. His account can seem to derive normative claims from (supposed) biological facts. Woman is likened to a plant, man to an animal;⁵¹³ woman is said to

512. For the moment I purposely leave 'freedom' ambiguous. Frederick Neuhouser addresses the question of who is the bearer of this freedom in *Foundations of Hegel's Social Theory: Actualizing Freedom* (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 2000), ch. 1. The ambiguity is present in Hegel's work, but not as a fault of exposition. It is a necessary outcome of his argument in which it would be true to say that this is the freedom of absolute spirit, but also of the institutions of ethical life, and no less of the individual human being. This chapter will not do justice to this complex thought, but it will attempt a limited understanding when it addresses the relation of the family member to the institution of the family. Related to the above point is the even more difficult aspect of Hegel's argument that freedom is not properly thought of as a property at all, but rather as substance. As self-positing, in Hegel's account, freedom is both moving principle and actualized end. We must grasp it as universal but also as subject, hence not as an abstract universal but as the Hegelian 'concrete' universal.

513. PR, §166 A.

be passive, man to be active.⁵¹⁴ And these claims appear to be used to ground the claim that woman's vocation is to membership in the family, while man "has his actual substantial life in the state, in learning [*Wissenschaft*], etc. and otherwise in work and struggle with the external world."⁵¹⁵ In the Preface of *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, Hegel speaks of freedom as the realm of spirit which produces from within itself a second nature⁵¹⁶ but the family is spoken of as immediate and natural.⁵¹⁷ It is not surprising, then, that Hegel has been interpreted as relegating woman to remaining in a 'first nature,' while reserving for man the destiny of developing a 'second nature' in which freedom is to be found.⁵¹⁸ It would appear that woman's place is in the family because of a limitation in her nature. This suggests that there are two assumptions at work in Hegel's account of the family: 1) there is a biologically determined inequality between men and women, and 2) because it is a *limitation* which suits woman to family life, that life must be de-valued in contrast to economic and political life. Given the above concerns, it is natural to suspect that Hegel is merely presenting a rationalization of the *status quo*, not a compelling understanding of freedom.

I will argue that the above characterization of Hegel's account of the family, and of women and men in it, is not accurate. But I hope to show more than that he merely escapes the

514. PR, §166.

515. PR, §166.

516. PR, §4.

517. For example at PR, §§157, 158, 175, 176.

518. An example of this can be found in Patricia J. Mills, *Woman, Nature and Psyche* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987) which I discuss below.

above criticisms: I hope it will become apparent that a proper understanding of his account reveals that the normative demands which lie behind such criticisms - the equality of men and women as persons and moral subjects, and their right to subjective freedom - are in fact central to (though not comprehensive of) Hegel's project.⁵¹⁹ For this reason addressing these concerns is, I think, especially helpful in clarifying Hegel's position. Hence I will return to them after giving a positive account of the family as Hegel understands it.⁵²⁰

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519. What is distinctive in Hegel's approach is his answer to how these normative demands are met. It is beyond the scope of this chapter to demonstrate adequately how abstract right and morality are taken up in ethical life but we will see in Hegel's account of the family that the demand to be a person and to be a moral subject are addressed respectively in the development of particularity and the willing of a universal will. I concur with the judgement of Neuhouser that Hegel's argument is not that a special Hegelian freedom is to eclipse what are more easily recognizable forms of freedom - what Neuhouser terms 'personal freedom' and 'moral freedom' - but that Hegel's argument reveals how a world that did not instantiate personal, moral, and 'social' freedom could not be regarded as fully rational and satisfying (*Foundations of Hegel's Social Theory*, 33-34). It should be noted further that Hegel stands virtually alone in attempting to justify these normative demands. This justification is a task for his system as a whole (cf. PR, §141 A on this).
520. F. L. Jackson makes a similar argument to mine, though in a different and more generalized form, by arguing that the principles at work in the major strands of critique of Hegel are themselves to be found in Hegel, though not as isolated from each other:

... one understands little if anything of Hegel if it is not recognized that he is already thinking beyond the standpoint of modernity, thus also beyond the merely bourgeois, romantic view of the family. His remarks concerning gender differences (for that matter concerning psychological, cultural, racial, religious or any other difference elsewhere in his works) have accordingly to be understood entirely in terms of his vision of a freedom which is reconciled to nature, and not the abstract freedom for which natural differences are *either* absolute or else wholly irrelevant (F. L. Jackson, 'Freedom and the Tie that Binds: Marriage as an Ethical Institution,' *Animus* 6 (2001), n. 16).

I concentrate on Hegel's account of the family in the *Elements of the Philosophy of Right* because this is his definitive account in so far as it has a place in his mature system. The *Philosophy of Right* is an expansion of Hegel's more condensed account of objective spirit in part III of the *Encyclopaedia*.⁵²¹ In *The Phenomenology of Spirit* Hegel discusses the family and the figure of Antigone, and in his lectures on aesthetics he returns to Antigone and the (specifically) ancient Greek family. These striking passages are often the focus of commentary on Hegel's view of the family, however, in each case they are part of larger dialectical arguments, the nature of which is not at all obvious. They may be illuminating but one must be careful not to assume that they can be taken out of context and stand as straightforward claims which articulate Hegel's understanding of the nature of the family and of the relation between men and women in the modern era. Especially important in this regard is Hegel's argument that the modern era is distinguished from antiquity by the development of the principle of subjective freedom. This principle is the focus of "Part Two: Morality" in *The Philosophy of Right*.⁵²² Hegel argues that this principle remains abstract (unrealized) in morality and is only actualized in ethical life (*Sittlichkeit*) and that the family is the first, immediate moment of this actualization.

Hegel's concept of freedom is essential to his account of the family as an 'ethical institution.' It will therefore be helpful to begin with this concept. Doing so will allow us to see

521. *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften*, Vol. III (1817, rev. 1827, 1830) in Hegel, *Werke*, X (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1986), translated by William Wallace and A.V. Miller as *Hegel's Philosophy of Mind* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971).

522. §§105 - 141, for a succinct statement cf. §124 A

the central and necessary role of mediation in actualizing freedom and to understand freedom as the activity of self-determination in Hegel's view. This will help us to make sense of his account of the family while at the same time that account will give content to Hegel's idea of freedom as mediated self-determination. Hegel's basic idea is that in love and trust we possess and know our freedom in an immediate form. He argues that love is both the end and the moving principle of the family, where love is understood as the communal activity of reciprocal care and recognition. In this activity the members of the family are distinct, particular individuals who actualize a universal will through their particularity (not despite it, nor merely in addition to it). Hegel's argument intends to reveal that the members of the family possess what he terms 'concrete freedom' and hence that freedom is the truth of the family.

IV.2 Hegel's Concept of Freedom:

In order to begin to understand what Hegel means by the above, I will turn to the Introduction of *The Philosophy of Right* where Hegel gives us a sketch of the will which develops his understanding of freedom.⁵²³ Hegel presents the will as an activity which is the

523. Cf. especially PR, §§5-7 and ff.. Strictly speaking, for Hegel, these (the will and freedom) are the same, for the will is the free will, as becomes clear by the end of §7 R: "The only thing which remains to be noted here is that, when we say that *the will* is universal and that *the will* determines itself, we speak as if the will were already assumed to be a *subject* or *substratum*. But the will is not complete and universal until it is determined, and until this determination is superseded and idealized; it does not become will until it is this self-mediating activity and this return into itself." We tend to think of the will as a *thing* which *has* freedom. But ultimately for Hegel it is a mistake to think their relation as that of a thing and its property. Cf. also §4: "The basis [*Boden*] of right is the *realm of spirit* in

unity of distinct moments. The first moment of the will is its ability to abstract from any particular determination of itself - it is free not to will any particular content:

The will contains ... the element of *pure indeterminacy* or of the 'I' 's pure reflection into itself, in which every limitation, every content, whether present immediately through nature, through needs, desires, and drives, or given and determined in some other way, is dissolved; this is the limitless infinity of *absolute abstraction* or *universality*, the pure thinking of oneself.⁵²⁴

Hegel's basic point about the will is that I *am* my freedom, or in different words, who I am truly (my 'self') is what I will.⁵²⁵ The first moment of the will is a negative moment - it is the freedom from being externally determined. This is not to be confused with the idea of a freedom to posit (or determine) itself as anything. Living in the 21st century, I am not free, for example, to posit myself as an 18th century gentleman (though I may dress like one). But I am free not to will any particular content, that is, not to posit a particular end or not to affirm something I find given

general and its precise location and point of departure is the *will*; the will is *free*, so that freedom constitutes its substance and destiny [*Bestimmung*] and the system of right is the realm of actualized freedom, the world of spirit produced within itself as a second nature" and §4 A: "Will without freedom is an empty word."

524. PR, §5.

525. I do not mean to suggest that Hegel opposes the activity of willing to that of thinking here. It would be more precise in explicating Hegel's idea to say that the basic idea is that I am my thinking, and that this thinking 'steps into existence' in willing: the "distinction between thought and will is simply that between theoretical and practical attitudes. ... they are not two separate faculties; on the contrary, the will is a particular way of thinking - thinking translating itself into existence" (PR, §4 A). Further, to think of my self as my thinking is not to oppose this to the idea of my self as my freedom: "Freedom is just thinking itself" (from Hegel's 1822-1823 lectures, quoted by the editors of PR in n.1. to §5). Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, vol. III, trans. E. Haldane (New York: Humanities Press, 1968), 402.

(such as a desire or bodily attribute) as my 'self.' With respect to the last, in the extreme, I may commit suicide.⁵²⁶ The act of suicide can be understood, not as a denial of my 'self,' but rather as a radical disavowal of this body as essential to it.⁵²⁷ Similarly we can understand the man who enters a duel to defend his honor as identifying with his honor as opposed to his body. More mundanely, we have the commonplace idea that though I may have been born in a country, that fact need not determine who I am. If it were not the case that I am what I will, then there could be no true development in history, or conversion within an individual life, there could be only externally determined changes.⁵²⁸

Hegel argues that what he understands as a moment of the will - negative freedom - is what many people assume to be freedom itself (the whole of freedom or the actuality of freedom). Contrary to this, Hegel argues that negative freedom is an abstraction. This is to say that, taken on its own, it does not (and cannot) exist. Understanding negative freedom as an abstraction explains what otherwise might seem to be two blatant exaggerations. These are

526. Cf. PR, §5 A: "The human being alone is able to abandon all things, even his own life: he can commit suicide. The animal cannot do this; it always remains only negative, in a determination which is alien to it and to which it merely grows accustomed. The human being is pure thinking of himself, and only in thinking is he this power to give himself universality, that is, to extinguish all particularity, all determinacy." Cf. also PR, §§47-48 and Remarks on this point.

527. This can be so regardless of how we answer the question of the self's immortality.

528. Hegel's claim about "the limitless infinity of *absolute abstraction*" (PR, §5) which is the first moment of the will might at first seem to be a very un-Hegelian claim. What of the popular view that Hegel claims we are always creatures of our time? Only a free subject (and a subject that is not free is not a subject) can have a history. Understanding historical development and freedom go hand-in-hand, they are not opposed.

Hegel's description of the theoretical attachment to this conception of freedom as a desire for the "void" and his claim that the practical attachment to it results in "the fury of destruction" (as in the reign of terror in the French revolution).⁵²⁹ The theoretical attachment to this conception of freedom must see any determination of the will as an unacceptable limitation of the will. To hold fast to this freedom then (or to attempt to actualize it) is to hold fast to its indeterminacy, that is, to actively will not-to-will any particular content. But this is to will nothing. Now if I am my freedom, if I determine my self through my will, then in the above I am willing to be the void.⁵³⁰ This is not, Hegel argues, actually possible. Ironically the person attached to this idea of freedom does will something determinate (if even only minimally so), since his will is determined specifically to will no particular content.⁵³¹ This is to will that an abstraction be concrete, though this is not evident to such a person.⁵³² Hegel argues that the practical attachment to negative freedom leads to a relentless destructiveness: "Only in destroying something does this negative will have a feeling of its own existence."⁵³³ Any positive determination is contrary to freedom, if negative freedom is made absolute. Thus if this will is to

529. PR, §5 and A.

530. Even if we set aside the idea that I am my freedom, it still remains that my freedom amounts to nothing in this theoretical attachment. That is, I am free only in so far as I do not will anything particular.

531. Hegel's general idea here is that to will is always to will something, and more generally, that to be is to be determinate. Negative freedom is, contrary to first appearances, determinate: "since it is an abstraction from all determinacy, it is itself not *without* determinacy" (PR, §6 R).

532. 'The void' itself is an abstraction i.e. it is merely the conception of what is *not* the actual. That the Hindu sage is inevitably involved in a life-long struggle to negate all particularity is a consequence of this in Hegel's view (PR, §5 A).

533. PR, §5.

be embodied in the world, its embodiment would have to be the negating of all particular determinations. If we try to think what this negative freedom is (if we try to think of this first moment of the will as fully actual, not as one aspect of what is in fact substantial or actual) we can only say that it is not the determinate.⁵³⁴ This is, in Hegel's terminology, its 'negativity.' It reveals itself as not actual, as not self-standing.⁵³⁵ This moment of the will is the potential to abstract from any particular determination.⁵³⁶ Something must *have* this potential. That something is the actual will (which we will see shortly Hegel takes to be the unity of the first and second moments of the will).

The second moment of the will in Hegel's account is the positing of a particular content, object or end.⁵³⁷ Without this positing there can be no will, for as we have seen, the first moment

534. I will say more about what Hegel means by 'substantial' in this context after discussing the unity of the two moments of the will.

535. PR, §6 and A.

536. "Only *one* aspect of the will is defined here - namely this *absolute possibility* of *abstracting* from every determination in which I find myself or which I have posited in myself, the flight from every content as a limitation" (PR, §5 R). It is important that this moment of the will be capable of abstracting from *any* content - whether given by nature or posited by me - this is why it is thought by some to be absolutely free or infinite in Hegel's sense. If this were not so (if it were only the capacity to abstract from what I have posited), then the attempt to live this negative freedom would result in the attempt to live an instinctual animal life, not to unite with the void.

537. The formulation of the determinacy of the will as 'object, content or end' is from PR, §7 R. §6 introduces this moment:

'I' is the transition from undifferentiated indeterminacy to *differentiation*, *determination*, and the *positing* of a determinacy as a content and object. - This content may further be given by nature, or generated by the concept of spirit. Through this positing of itself as something *determinate*, 'I' steps

of the will is a potentiality not an actuality. The will is the willing of something. This second moment answers the deficiency of the first. In it the will “steps into existence.”⁵³⁸ But in so answering it there is a contradiction: willing something is necessary for the will to ‘step into existence’ but doing so limits the will to whatever it is willing, making it finite and so losing the infinite (or universal) potential of the first moment. We could state this contradiction differently by saying that the will can only exist by destroying its essence but then it would not be the will and so wouldn’t exist. This contradiction arises if we take the positing will to be the actual will. Hence Hegel says that the second moment of the will “belongs to freedom, but does not constitute the whole of freedom.”⁵³⁹

The insufficiency of the second moment is its finitude. In so far as it is merely finite, the will is not free. Hegel does not elaborate on this in §6 because he takes it to be intuitively obvious. Hence his remark that “Reflective thought usually regards the first moment, namely the indeterminate, as the absolute and higher moment, and conversely regards the limited as a mere

into existence [*Dasein*] in general - the absolute moment of the *finitude* or *particularization* of the 'I' (PR, §6).

538. PR, §6. Hegel speaks of the 'I' here rather than the 'will.' However, it is appropriate to interchange these because the outcome of his argument is that the actual will - the 'Idea' of freedom in Hegel's technical sense - has the structure of a subject (and that is the structure of a self-determining activity). We are inclined to think of the will as a faculty of a subject, but for Hegel this is an abstract representation which results from taking the distinction between willing and thinking as absolute (PR, §4 A).

539. PR, §6 A.

negation of this indeterminacy.”⁵⁴⁰ If we ask ourselves why finitude is intuitively insufficient to freedom we are led to Hegel’s idea of self-determination as an explication of what freedom is.⁵⁴¹ Whatever is finite stands in relation to what it is not. This relation is part of what it is to *be* what it is (the negativity of the finite is essential to it as finite).⁵⁴² We could state this differently by saying that whatever is finite is in part determined by what is external to it. The attraction of the first moment of the will is that it appears to avoid this determination by what is external or ‘other.’ (In part this explains why the first moment is taken to be first, I will return to this point later). What is not self-determined is not self-standing. It is like the product of the craftsperson, whose final and efficient causes lie outside it. Hegel’s way of expressing this is to say that it is not ‘substantial.’

When we understand *both* the necessity of each moment *and* the deficiency of each, then we know *that* (though not yet *how*) the actual will must be the unity of these.⁵⁴³ The two moments of the will must be understood as co-relative aspects of the actual will: each is

540. PR, §6 A. Hence Hegel's focus is to point out that the first moment also has negativity, or reference to what it is not, within it.

541. At least we are lead to the bare idea of this. That is, we are led to the concept, though not to all that it necessitates.

542. As commentators have pointed out, Hegel takes up Spinoza's principle that *omnis determinatio est negatio* (for example, Neuhouser, *Foundations of Hegel's Social Theory*, 286, n.6).

543. Understanding the 'how' will involve understanding that a subject 1) is free in the sense of self-determining, and 2) is the activity of uniting universality and particularity (or actualizing universality in and through particularity, a particularity which 'returns' to that universality as its end (as what it *means*)).

necessary to the actuality of the will and each necessarily refers to the other (Hegel would say they mediate each other). As such the first and second moments of the will should not be construed as separate elements which, added together, make up a whole. Their relation is dialectical. This is an instance of Hegel's general claim that it is not just our thinking about reality but reality itself which is dialectical.⁵⁴⁴ Each moment of the will taken on its own is an abstraction, for the free will is both universal and particular: without universality it is not free, without particularity it is not existent. Hegel expresses the logical structure of this as follows:

What is properly called the will contains both the preceding moments. 'I' as such is primarily pure activity, the universal which is with itself [*bei sich*]; but this universal determines itself, and to that extent is no longer with itself but posits itself as an other and ceases to be the universal. Then the third moment is that 'I' is with itself in its limitation, in this other; as it determines itself, it nevertheless still remains with itself and does not cease to hold fast to the universal.⁵⁴⁵

The above is a schematic formulation of the will which is substantial.⁵⁴⁶ As discussed in earlier chapters, Hegel uses the term 'substantial' for that which is actual, as distinct from what is an aspect of this but not the whole of it, or from what is an abstract representation of the understanding. This much is clear and easily understood from his discussion of the first two moments of the will. What is more difficult to understand is the nature of the actual. What is

544. Hegel's claim that reality itself is dialectical goes hand in hand with his claim that what is ultimate ontologically is subject/substance as activity.

545. PR, §7A.

546. For helpful accounts of the demand that freedom be substantial and the ways in which the mediation essential to substantial freedom is achieved see Neuhouser (ch. 1) and Patten (93-103).

actual, in Hegel's view, exists, but it is not mere existence, it is what has a self-standing existence. What is self-standing is not determined by anything external to it. It is self-determined, that is, it is free, or, as Hegel sometimes says, it is 'infinite.' Hegel characterizes the achievement of self-standing existence as 'individuality' (*Einzelheit*).⁵⁴⁷ The formulation quoted above emphasizes that this achievement is not a static outcome, but is an activity of uniting universality with particularity (for this reason Hegel also refers to individuality as the concrete universal).⁵⁴⁸ The structure of this activity is the structure of a subject.

Hegel develops his idea of substantiality further: for the will to be actual the uniting of universality and particularity must not be taken to be merely subjective (or to say the same thing, the uniting must not be merely within the subjective will). To be actual requires the uniting of the subjective and the objective.⁵⁴⁹ The particular determinations of the will can remain as mere intentions, or they can be "actualized and accomplished through the mediation of its [the will's] activity as it translates the subjective into objectivity."⁵⁵⁰ Hegel terms mere intention the "*formal* [*formale*] will"⁵⁵¹ while the accomplished intention is the "content" of the will, that is, the actual

547. As Neuhouser points out, Hegel uses 'individuality' in both a technical sense and a non-technical sense (41, n42). The latter can simply mean particularity. This can be a source of great confusion since his technical sense refers to the activity which unites universality and particularity!

548. When we have more details of Hegel's account before us we will be able to articulate his notion of 'universality' more fully.

549. PR, §§8 and 9.

550. PR, §9.

551. PR, §8.

will embodied in the world. To be substantial the will must not only will something determinate (the argument of §6), it must *effectively* will this. It is important to note this use of 'content' in Hegel. The mere subjective intention of the (subjective) will is not its 'content.' Hegel's use of this term parallels his reference to Anaxagoras' *nous* (or more generally the ancient idea of a *logos*) as in us and in the world: it is objective and subjective.⁵⁵² This is not as strange as it might seem at first. My subjective intention is that something obtain in reality. The 'content' of my will is this actualized end (an end which is both the moving principle and the actual result of my willing). Another way to put this is that in willing something I am not merely willing that I intend it, I am willing that it be. (See chapter two regarding how we should not interpret this as a form of content externalism. It is an 'idealism' in the sense that the end is a content: its truth is grasped -with complete adequacy - by thought.)

The question we are left with is *how* the two moments of the will *can* be united in one and the same activity (i.e. how there can be a substantial will). Somehow this activity must be the effective willing of particularity - of objective determinations - yet this must not amount to a curtailment of freedom. And if it turns out (as Hegel will in fact argue) that for me to will effectively I must enter into relations with other people then there is the additional demand that I must be free in those relations (unless freedom is a utopian concept).⁵⁵³ We can generalize this

552. Cf. WL, 39, 45, 50.

553. We will see eventually that this is an inadequate way of formulating the question for it suggests that my relations with others are an external condition of my freedom rather than the embodiment of that freedom.

predicament by saying that for freedom to be actual I must necessarily be related to an other, yet be free in this relation.⁵⁵⁴

The structure of Hegel's answer to this dilemma is that we are free in the other if in knowing it we know ourselves, if in willing it we will ourselves. Taken out of context, this might be mistaken for a form of ethical egoism (or at least as most naturally leading to a form of ethical egoism). It is clear that Hegel does not intend it to be, but the full understanding of how it is not is extremely difficult to articulate in a fully satisfying manner. I will address this in the particular case of family members in the next section when we have more concrete details before us. But I will anticipate the argument a bit and say something provisional and schematic here. For this to be a form of egoism, it would need to be a view about the relation of individuals understood as atomic selves. Hegel denies that it is:

The ethical is not abstract like the good, but it is intensely actual. The spirit has

554. What is 'other' includes both other people and the particular content of my own will (on the latter cf. PR, §7 A, quoted above). The designation of particular determinations of my will as 'other' needs some explanation. When I effectively will something particular my will is embodied in the world. In a sense this embodied will *is* my will (it is how it exists in the world) and yet at the same time I must say 'that is not me' because I think of myself as free, and something which is just that particular (finite) determination is not free to be anything but what it is. Hence Hegel speaks of this as the will positing the negative of itself (PR, §7). In this sense, any particular determination of will is seen by me as 'other.' This is not to be confused with seeing it as alien or as something to which I am indifferent. On Hegel's account, the romantic ironist does just this - he distances himself from his own acts in a vain attempt to be above them (fearing his freedom will be tarnished by them). Cf., for example, PR, §140 R, the penultimate paragraph remark of "Morality," which is intended to bring out the abstract nature of subjective freedom when not united with the (universal, objective) good as the true content of that freedom.

actuality, and the individuals are its accidents. Thus, there are always only two possible viewpoints in the ethical realm: either one starts from substantiality, or one proceeds atomistically and moves upward from the basis of individuality [*Einzelheit*]. This latter viewpoint excludes spirit, because it leads only to an aggregation, whereas spirit is not something individual [*nichts Einzelnes*] but the unity of the individual and the universal.⁵⁵⁵

How are we to understand this? First, in Hegel's account, the self is not a thing, it is the series of its acts ("What the subject *is*, is *the series of its actions*").⁵⁵⁶ Second, this self grasps its essence as the ethical world: "the subject bears *spiritual witness* to [the ethical substance and its laws and powers which have absolute power and authority] as to *its own essence*."⁵⁵⁷ Third, our 'true' self (which is our freedom) is the universal free will actualized in the particular determinations of our will (the result - the winning of our true self - is contrasted to willing the content of our arbitrary will).⁵⁵⁸ Hegel argues that there is an objective content to our freedom. This is the focus of the introductory section of "Ethical Life" in *The Philosophy of Right*. Ethical life is presented as the unity of two moments: the good as the content of freedom and the subjective freedom of the individual as the form of freedom. The good without subjective freedom is only an abstraction; subjective freedom without the objectivity of the good is empty or arbitrary. I do not come into

555. PR, §156 A. Hegel's non-atomistic beginning point in ethical reflection influences his views about indirect representation in the legislature, see, for example PR, §303, §303 R and §308 R.

556. PR, §124.

557. PR, §147.

558. Cf. PR, §§148 - 149 where Hegel argues that a "binding duty can appear as a *limitation* only in relation to indeterminate subjectivity or abstract freedom, and to the drives of the natural will or of the moral will which arbitrarily determines its own indeterminate good. The individual, however, finds his *liberation* in duty" (PR, §149).

possession of myself in mere arbitrary willing, rather I come into possession of myself in the willing of the good. The good here is not instrumental to my possessing myself, rather it *is* my 'substance.'⁵⁵⁹ I, as an individual, am both universal and particular, and these are mutually dependent (more precisely: they are only separated out from each other in our abstract understanding, for each cannot be what it is without the other). What is universal is only actual through the particular, and the particular is only actual through the universal. The universal, on its own, would remain abstract; the particular, on its own, would be meaningless, 'spiritless,' insubstantial. Hence the gaining of our true self is intrinsically connected with the actualization of the universal good.⁵⁶⁰

559. I will expand on this idea later. Hegel goes so far as to speak of "self-forgetfulness" and "self-renunciation" when contrasting the attitude of the self in the ethical realm (where subjective freedom immerses itself in the objectivity of the good) with the attitude of the ironist (PR, §140 R).

560. Here, and later in what I will argue about Hegel's view of the family, my intention is to make sense of Hegel's metaphysical claims, rather than setting them aside or re-constructing them in a deflationary manner. For an example of the latter in relation to the precise question at issue - the necessary structure of the realization of freedom - cf. Robert Pippin 'What is the Question for which Hegel's Theory of Recognition is the Answer?' *European Journal of Philosophy* 8, no. 2 (2000): 155-172. Put simply, the question that Pippin raises in this paper is "*why does Hegel think a subject cannot be free 'alone' "*" (156). Pippin gives a social constructivist answer designed to steer clear of metaphysical claims, in particular any claims about special causal powers of the self as connected with its freedom and more generally any sort of voluntarist picture of human freedom. On this reading, to be a subject (which is to be an agent, to be free) just is to take oneself to be a subject and to be taken by others as a subject:

'being an agent' is not to be analysed in terms of properties and inherent capacities but as itself a kind of collective social construct, an achieved state. The notion rather functions a bit like 'being a speaker of a natural language': where vocalizations count as speaking the language only within a language community that takes such vocalizations to commit the speaker

What I am arguing differs slightly from an important argument in Neuhouser's *Foundations of Hegel's Social Theory*.⁵⁶¹ Neuhouser argues that Hegel's criticism of Rousseau's social contract theory (as involving an unacceptable 'atomism' in some sense) and the kind of point which Hegel is making in, for instance, saying that in an ethical state one will be willing to die in defense of the state, does not necessitate a giving up of methodological atomism in ethical justification.⁵⁶² This is to concur with Allen Wood that justification in Hegel always is justification with respect to the individual. But Neuhouser is concerned with making this more precise: the individual upon which all justification is based is not an individual conceived as

to various proprieties and entitlements (162).

Pippin is sensitive to a very important element in Hegel's account, namely that my relations with others are constitutive of my own identity, but it is not clear that such constructivist interpretations do ultimately avoid giving or presuming answers to substantive metaphysical questions. On this issue cf. James Kreines, 'Hegel's Metaphysics: Changing the Debate,' *Philosophy Compass*, 1, no. 5 (2006) 466-480. Kreines argues that one cannot avoid metaphysics in Hegel (however one interprets Hegel, one will find him giving substantive answers to questions that pre-Kantian metaphysicians asked), but that even the 'non-metaphysical' interpreters should not really think that they *should*, by their own lights, be trying to avoid it or even understand themselves to have avoided it in their reconstructions. He presents a case for the following claims: "Traditionalists [readers of Hegel who do not excise the metaphysics] see Hegel as aspiring to surpass or get beyond [the limits Kant sets to knowledge] ... Nontraditionalists [following Hartmann], by contrast, see Hegel as aspiring not to surpass but to eliminate Kant's limits, or to erase those limits from within" (469-70). Both these groups should, Kreines argues, accept that Hegel is seeking "to establish knowledge of 'what is truly in itself' (WL 5:130/121)" (469).

561. Frederick Neuhouser, *Foundations of Hegel's Social Theory* (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 2000), 5-6, 49 and ch. 6, "Hegel's Social Theory and Methodological Atomism," 175-224 (for a summary account see 219-220).

562. *Foundations of Hegel's Social Theory*, 219.

possibly existing prior to the state, as if in a state of nature.⁵⁶³ Rather, this individual has a complex self-formation in which his or her engagement with the institutions that are the state is partly constitutive. Hence the (ethical) state is not merely an external instrument of convenience for the realization of the goals of the individual (let alone a force that is contrary to those goals).⁵⁶⁴ Such an instrument is something we would pick up or discard according to our judgment about its continued instrumentality *versus* its ineffectiveness. This instrumental view of the state (with its implicit view of the constitution of individual freedom), Neuhouser argues, is what Hegel is concerned with criticizing in Rousseau's social contract theory (i.e. Hegel's concern is not with methodological atomism *per se*, even though Hegel himself is not a methodological atomist). The ethical justification for an individual's willingness to endanger his (or her)⁵⁶⁵ life for the state can be based on the good of the *individual* (the good of that specific individual who is sacrificing his safety), when the freedom and fulfillment of the individual is seen as partly constituted by his engagement with, and affirmation of, the institutions which are the life of the state. (A more primitive and less successful form of this giving up of one's life for what one knows oneself to be - or thinks oneself to be - can be found in the person who is willing to lay down his life for his honor.)⁵⁶⁶ I concur with Neuhouser's argument on this point, but

563. *Foundations of Hegel's Social Theory*, 175 ff.

564. Many important goals of the individual cannot be actualized, nor even understood, independently of the (ethical) state.

565. Hegel does not have in his conceptual imagination the possibility of women in military service, but the logic of his argument does not exclude this.

566. See PhG, "Independence and Dependence of Self-consciousness: Lordship and Bondage," §§178-196. (The above aside is mine).

differ over a qualification which Neuhausser adds at the end of his account. Neuhausser brackets Hegel's metaphysics. This allows for a reading which is fully acceptable to contemporary liberalism, which demands that all ethical justification be tied to the freedom or good of the individual, in a society of equals (and demands whatever metaphysics would support this fundamental ethical demand). This does, however, require Neuhausser to admit that in Hegel there remains a (lingering, we might say) conception of the state as an organization capable of greater self-standingness than any particular individual, and as such, having a good of its own (a freedom which cannot be *fully* construed in terms of the freedom of individuals).⁵⁶⁷ I am differing in that I think that if we take on Hegel's metaphysics (his unity of the infinite and the finite as discussed in chapter two) then even this last vestige of the ethical state as a more fully self-standing organism which could be *opposed* to the individual disappears. The cost of this is to accept a metaphysical view which goes beyond what contemporary liberalism would espouse, a metaphysical view consistent with an orthodox Christian understanding of the presence of the (infinite) Holy Spirit within the community of (finite) human beings. If there is such a unity of the infinite and the finite, then the opposition of kinds of ethical justification (the opposition of methodological atomism *versus* justification based on the state, or 'community,' as an organism greater than the individual, where the individual is taken as *simply* finite) disappears.

Let us return to the general structure of Hegel's answer to the dilemma that for freedom to be actual I must necessarily be related to an other, yet be free in this relation: we are free in the

567. Cf. *Foundations of Hegel's Social Theory*, 203 and 208-215.

other if in knowing it we know ourselves, if in willing it we will ourselves. This is what Hegel means by a 'mediated' freedom. One might object that this is not an answer, but only a different way of stating the problem. Hegel would agree, which is why he always protests when he writes prefaces and introductions. We will have to see how his account of the family makes this more concrete. But nevertheless it is important to have before us this general structure: a freedom which is actual is necessarily a mediated freedom. It is this which necessitates the institutions of ethical life. Or better: the institutions of ethical life just are the embodiment of this necessary mediation in the actualization of freedom. If we can understand what this mediation is, and how it is possible, then we will understand how freedom is the activity of self-determination, and hence self-standing and infinite; we will understand Hegel's cryptic statement that the free will wills the free will.⁵⁶⁸

IV.3 Freedom and the Family

In the above I have discussed what Hegel's argument must accomplish (on his own grounds) and the general structure of his answer. What remains to be noted is the form which his argument takes. He does not give us an abstract argument to convince us that mediated freedom, the unity of universality and particularity (of the universal moment of the will and the particular

568. "The abstract concept of the Idea of the will is in general *the free will which wills the free will*" (PR, §27). Cf. also PR, §21 A, and §108 A: "In morality, self-determination should be thought of as sheer restless activity which cannot yet arrive at something *that is*. Only in the ethical realm does the will become identical with the concept of the will and have the latter alone as its content."

moment of the will) is possible, and then turn to instances of such a possibility. Rather, his argument takes the form of looking at the family (and other ethical institutions) and seeing how it reveals this unity. That is, he moves from what is actual to a knowledge of its rationality.

Hegel's view is that the truth of the family is freedom and that freedom is possessed in an immediate form in the family as love. These are intriguing claims. In this section I will develop Hegel's idea of love and of the family as its embodiment or actualization, and in so doing attempt to understand this actualization as freedom (and so connect Hegel's account of the family in the first section on ethical life in *The Philosophy of Right* with his very abstract account of freedom - or the free will - in the Introduction to *The Philosophy of Right*). Hegel writes: "The family, as the *immediate substantiality* of spirit, has as its determination the spirit's *feeling* [*Empfindung*] of its own unity, which is *love*."⁵⁶⁹ As Hegel understands it, love is the activity of finding myself in another. Loving another in part means finding my completion in the other.⁵⁷⁰ Hence the devastation felt at the loss of one's lover, and the feeling of deficiency without him/her. This, however, is only the first moment in loving. The second is that in the other's loving me, I find myself, as it were, given back to me. Love is, therefore, necessarily a *reciprocal* relation and activity. Furthermore, what is given and found is the *whole* self, not one aspect alone. This is why Hegel sees monogamy as essential to marriage⁵⁷¹ and it is what distinguishes the activity of

569. PR, §158.

570. PR, §158 A.

571. PR, §167.

love and the institution of the family from other forms of community (I will return to this point). We might speak of 'being in love' with someone who does not know us or who does not return our love, but, in Hegel's sense, this would be a derivative use of the word 'love.' We would at most be describing one aspect of what is actual love (and which therefore could only have a *subjective* existence in us). Because my consciousness of myself is gained through giving myself up to another, Hegel describes this process as a contradiction produced and resolved by love: "Love means in general the consciousness of my unity with another, so that I am not isolated on my own [*für mich*], but gain my self-consciousness only through the renunciation of my independent existence [*meines Fürsichseins*] and through knowing myself as the unity of myself with another and of the other with me."⁵⁷²

The paradoxical nature of love is of central importance. One might mistake Hegel's view of the structure of love for a kind of egoism - as though I love another in order to achieve my consciousness of myself through recognition. But there is no calculation of advantage involved in his account. Indeed, if there were calculation, and so use of another as a means to my end, then it would not be possible for me to give my whole self, because for there to be an end that was 'mine' in the required sense I would have to stand opposed to the other. The project of understanding the family as an ethical institution requires the philosophical comprehension of the nature of love (of what is actually accomplished and how it is accomplished - to use Hegelian terminology, it requires the comprehension of the 'logic of love'). If this 'logical' account is

572. PR, §158 A.

confused with an account of love focused on the psychological motives of lovers then it may be misunderstood as a kind of egoism. In Hegel's account one does not seek one's freedom, but, surprisingly, one finds it in giving one's self to another wholly (and so necessarily unconditionally). This is the paradox. It would not be inappropriate to speak of it as a form of grace (though Hegel himself does not use this language). The result, in Hegel's view, is *felt* by lovers, not cognitively grasped by them.⁵⁷³ In contrast, Hegel thinks Kant's view of marriage as a contract is a debased view:

[It is] crude to interpret marriage merely as a civil contract, a notion [*Vorstellung*] which is still to be found even in Kant. On this interpretation, marriage gives contractual form to the arbitrary relations between individuals, and is thus debased to a contract entitling the parties concerned to use one another⁵⁷⁴

Hegel's focus is not on love broadly construed, which would include divine love and the traditional theological virtue of charity. His focus is on intimate personal love (in particular the romantic love of couples), but he argues that there is more to this than we might presume. We are tempted, I think, to assume the standpoint of Hegel's romantic contemporaries and view love as a subjective feeling which is, in itself, substantial.⁵⁷⁵ What is crucial to Hegel's account is that a merely subjective love is not substantial. As merely subjective, love is no more than the

573. If they happen to be philosophers the truth about the nature of love might be cognitively grasped, but not *qua* lovers.

574. PR, §161 A, cf. also §163 R, and an earlier contrast between contract and ethical substance at §75 and §75 R.

575. Hegel notes that this is a view congenial to seducers (PR, §164 A)!

unfulfilled desire to give myself wholly to the other. For love to be actual it is necessary that it have an objective side: love demands the institution of the family. We can understand this demand by understanding how the reciprocity in the relational activity of loving can be successful. There are, I think, two aspects to this. The first is that the offering of myself to another takes the form of willing the other's good. This is not simply (if successful) a vague intention. It is made actual in the willing of specific, finite actions. These particular actions are the 'existence' (or embodiment) of that complete offering of myself. What this amounts to is a focused (as opposed to universal) altruism. The second aspect is that for the reciprocity of love to be effectual it must be stable. Without a stable embodiment, love - the unconditional (whole) giving of one's self to the other, and the paradoxical finding of one's self in this activity, through which the good of other and of self is realized - retreats back into the merely subjective and so is not yet actual. The determination of lovers to marry is the expression of this demand for stability, and the laws of the state which make possible the marriage vow answer this demand. The laws support and protect the family as a whole from the outside, but also from within (from the fickleness of one's own emotions).⁵⁷⁶ Strange as it might sound at first, love, as Hegel understands it, is not possible outside of the state, since it demands the family and this in turn demands the state (and civil society as a moment of the state which mediates the needs of the family). I think that this is intelligible when we realize first that Hegel is speaking of actual love (in his technical sense of 'actual') and second that the institutions of the family and the state (as

576. Love as a subjective emotion is unstable because it does not know its own ground. This is overcome in the state. I will discuss this in relation to the limitation of the family.

Hegel understands them) are objective, but they are not external mechanisms confining my will, they are not even external mechanisms *serving* my will. Rather they are the embodiment of my (free) will in the world.

The institution of the family is objective but its objectivity is what is willed by the free will as what is necessary in the actualization of love (the immediate form in which we possess freedom). Hegel expresses this in general terms in the introductory section to ethical life in *The Philosophy of Right* (referring not just to the family but to all that is ethical): "the ethical substance and its laws and powers are on the one hand an object [*Gegenstand*], in as much as *they are*,"⁵⁷⁷ but on "the other hand, they are not something *alien* to the subject. On the contrary, the subject bears *spiritual witness* to them as to *its own essence*, in which it has its *feeling of self* [*Selbstgefühl*] and lives as in its element which is not distinct from itself."⁵⁷⁸ The 'ethical substance and its laws and powers' are the 'essence' of the subject in that they are what is necessary in actualizing freedom (not simply necessary conditions of its actualization, but its necessary determinations).⁵⁷⁹ In thought we can discern a subjective and an objective aspect to love (though in actuality these aspects cannot be separated). The subjective side is the desire to give oneself to another (which entails willing the good of the other, and willing this in a stable

577. PR, §146.

578. PR, §147. I have altered Nisbet's translation of *Selbstgefühl* as 'self-awareness' to the more literal 'feeling of self' in this quotation.

579. We could say that they are my freedom in the world.

form). On its own this would leave us with an end as yet unrealized.⁵⁸⁰ The objective side is the legal status of the family, and the externality of the particular actions involved in its life. On its own this objective side would be like a corpse (to borrow an image from the *Phenomenology*).⁵⁸¹ Both these sides are needed for love to be actual, as Hegel understands it (as having the structure of mediated freedom in the form of feeling). When it is actual this love is an activity which is an end in itself. What Hegel means by 'institution' is precisely this activity, the dynamic life of the family.

It is crucial to understanding Hegel's account that we not identify 'institution' simply with the legal structure of the family and also that we do not misconstrue it as an external mechanism. Hegel is clearer when discussing the ethical 'institution' of the state: "the state is not a mechanism but the rational life of self-conscious freedom and the system of the ethical world."⁵⁸² If we substitute 'felt' for 'self-conscious' and insert 'implicit' before 'rational' and 'one moment in' before 'the system' then we have a succinct description of the family (i.e. 'the family is not a mechanism but the implicitly rational life of felt freedom and one necessary moment of

580. As such it would be like the good of the moral subject as Hegel understands this in part 2 of PR (for example cf. §141 and §141 R).

581. In the Preface to the PhG Hegel speaks of philosophical system as an actuality in the following manner: "the real issue is not exhausted by stating its aim, but by carrying it out, nor is the result the actual whole, but rather the result together with the process through which it came about. The aim by itself is a lifeless universal, just as the guiding tendency is a mere drive that as yet lacks an actual existence; and the bare result is the corpse which has left the guiding tendency behind it" (§§2-3). I take the unity here of intention and end to parallel the PR's discussion of the unity of the subjective and objective.

582. PR, §270 R.

the system of the ethical world').⁵⁸³ The family is 'rational' because it is what is necessitated by the concept of freedom. It is a 'system' (within the larger system of family - civil society - state) because the great diversity of actions which constitute its life constitute *one* activity. (I will return to this in discussing the family as an 'ethical substance'.)

The family is a unified and unifying activity. Willing its existence effectively consists in willing the good of the whole, but there is no whole which is separate from or above the members of the family. (There is a distinction between the common good and any particular good, but there is no common good apart from particular goods.) This means that one wills the good of the whole in willing the good of each member, and one wills the good of each member by willing particular actions which have the interest (in essence the freedom) of the other in mind. Hegel argues that, to be more than an intention, the common good must take on determinations, and he presents these as falling within what he sees as the three moments of family life: marriage, property, and the raising of children. Marriage is necessary, as we have seen, to make actual the unity of the subjective and objective sides of love. The marriage vow, when sincere, is the most obvious manifestation of this unity for it is easily recognized as at once

583. One might suppose that the condition of law and order is brought about by an external mechanism. But, Hegel argues, it is really the result of our willing as embodied in the state: "Representational thought often imagines that the state is held together by force; but what holds it together is simply the basic sense of order which everyone possesses" (PR, §268 A). We can lose sight of this since our willing of this becomes part of our second nature - the character which we develop in the process of willing determinate things. Hegel's idea here makes sense of the fact, for instance, that we do not today think of the law of pre-revolutionary France as the real law of France which is in the present time being broken. Law is 'law' only in name when it is not the embodied will of the people.

subjective (as inclination) and objective (as public and legal). The vow is the first act of a new life, and outside the context of this new life it is not really an act at all.⁵⁸⁴ I will later try to make some sense of Hegel's idea that the family is a *necessary* form of the concept of freedom, that for me to be free I must be a member of a family (and not just in my childhood). If we *can* make sense of this, then marriage will be seen to be a duty.⁵⁸⁵

It is in the context of the family that property (material goods in general) takes on an ethical significance.⁵⁸⁶ The physical needs and desires of each member need tending if there is to be a family. The property necessary for this is then required for the project of freedom and hence a 'duty' in Hegel's sense of this term. Such property is not divorced from the particular physical needs and desires of any one particular person, but it is also not limited to being merely the satisfaction of these. Because the project of freedom is a joint project, property is rightly held in common in the family. Hence Hegel is critical of inheritance laws which allow for this rational demand to be overturned by the caprice of the deceased, including the vanity of wishing the importance of 'the family' (i.e. the mere name) to be ensured by privileging the eldest son.⁵⁸⁷ In

584. For an obvious example of this failure to be an act, think of the words of the marriage vow being spoken in the context of a theatrical production.

585. This idea seems less strange when we note that Hegel uses 'duty' to mean the determinate content of freedom (PR, §§142-148, especially §148).

586. PR, §170.

587. PR, §180, §180 R, and §180 A. Hegel does allow one exception to this in the state: primogeniture is seen as necessary to one of the two 'estates' of civil society, that of landed property, in order for the upper house of the legislative power to function (§306 and A). The details of this constitutional arrangement (and what we ourselves make of it) are not relevant to our discussion. What *is* relevant is to note that Hegel understands this limited

acknowledging an importance to property Hegel is not endorsing a rampant materialism. He is acknowledging our physical needs (related to basic survival as well as to a culturally developed life) and sees in the communal satisfaction of these a properly universal, ethical spirit. The idea, I think, is that our inescapable attachment to the material world is redeemed.

It is easier to understand how marriage demands particular actions of spouses, each of which supports and is part of the dynamic activity of reciprocal recognition-through-the-other. It is more difficult to understand Hegel's account of children in a marriage. His account is based on his idea that children are not merely by-products of the love of parents, but in the most concrete form are the embodiment of the unity of the loving relation of the parents. It is rational then, that the parents care for and nurture their children as they care for and nurture their own freedom. These principles of care and nurture (or educating) inform every relation between parent and child in the ethical family. They are felt (known emotionally rather than cognitively) by children, as expressed in their love and trust, and are acknowledged in their obedience.⁵⁸⁸

institution of primogeniture to be an exception, and an exception which he thinks places a *burden* on the individuals of this estate, as it runs contrary to the love which is the principle of the family:

those members of this estate who are called to this vocation [*Bestimmung*] do not have the same right as other citizens either to dispose freely of their entire property or to know that it will pass on to their children in proportion to the equal degree of love that they feel for them. Thus, their resources become *inalienable inherited property*, burdened with primogeniture (PR, §306).

588. PR, §175.

Whatever is rationally necessary for the life of the family to be an ethical institution (i.e. to be the actualization of the freedom of its members) is a 'duty.'⁵⁸⁹ Such duties may appear simply as limitations or burdens to me as spouse and parent. Marriage *is* a limitation, the providing of property (material needs in general) and caring for the well-being and education of children *are* burdens. But at the same time these are the expressions of my will, and (crucially) not of my *arbitrary* will, but of my will to be free. Thus they are an expression of my essence (or better they are the particular existence in the world of my essence, they are the 'shape' of my essence). We see in this that there is a convergence of necessity and freedom. This is not the blind necessity of physical determinism but the rational necessity of the determinations of the concept of freedom. Understanding the relation of freedom and duty reconciles us to the ethical world, not in the sense of allowing us to acquiesce to it, but in the sense that we find ourselves in it. The philosophical comprehension of this accomplishes a cognitive reconciliation, the dynamic life of the family accomplishes a felt reconciliation. In each I am 'at home with myself in the other.' This was the demand that was abstractly formulated in the Introduction to *The Philosophy of Right* (the demand for mediation as essential to an actual freedom): "Freedom is to will something determinate, yet to be with oneself [*bei sich*] in this determinacy and to return once more to the universal."⁵⁹⁰

589. For Hegel's use of 'duty' cf. PR, §148 and R, and §149.

590. PR, §7 A. Neuhausser points out that the theses of reconciliation and freedom are complimentary: we are reconciled to the social order when we know it as rational, we know it as rational in so far as it is the actualization of our freedom (PR, §§7-8).

Hegel's idea is that the free will is essentially universal or infinite because it is not externally determined to any particular content (which is to say that it is not externally determined to be anything at all, for what it is, is its content). To use terms not quite Hegel's we could say the end of the will is to be truly universal (Hegel would say the concept of the will is concrete universality).⁵⁹¹ When Hegel presents the free will in the Introduction to *The Philosophy of Right* as the unity of the two moments of universality and particularity, it may appear that the order of these moments is arbitrary, but this is not the case. There is a priority to universality which I will explain as follows. The first moment (what we might call negative freedom) can be understood to be an attempt to fulfill the end of true universality. But it turns out to be not truly universal. Hegel gives two reasons for this conclusion: 1) it is in fact one particular determination, that of indeterminacy (for this reason Hegel speaks of it as a false infinite⁵⁹²) and 2) it has no existence in the world (the indeterminate is not one existence along side of others but in truth simply not this and not that existence). The second moment (the positing of some determinate content) makes up the deficiency of the first moment's lack of existence in the world. Interestingly, Hegel speaks of the second moment as being contained in the first.⁵⁹³ This only makes sense in the context of a teleological understanding of freedom: what he means is that the first moment is trying to be universal, and the second moment turns out

591. Cf. PR, §§21-24 for a dense discussion of the infinitude of the will and concrete universality. I do not claim to capture all of what Hegel says in the above discussion.

592. Cf. PR, §6 R.

593. PR, §6 R.

to be necessary for this (particularity turns out to be necessary to true universality, and so is contained in the concept of universality). But taken on its own the second moment limits the will, so the will loses its universality. For the will to achieve its end of universality requires the unity of these two moments. Hegel thinks of this unity as a universality through particularity and a restoration of particularity to universality,⁵⁹⁴ hence as a self-mediating activity.⁵⁹⁵ He speaks of what is gained in this as concrete universality (or true infinitude). One way we might think of this is that there is concrete universality when we see the particular determinations of our will, not as opposed to, but as expressing or manifesting the universality of our will. If we add to this that the content of our will is not merely subjective, but is rather the actuality which is at once subjective and objective, then we could see the family (or the state) with all its objectivity as the life of my freedom, or the expression of my universality.⁵⁹⁶

594. PR, §7.

595. PR, §7 R.

596. It might seem more natural to think of the content of our will as subjective only, but, as noted above, Hegel's idea is that what I will when I will X is that X be actual. The actuality of X is then the content of my will, and this is both subjective and objective. Because the content of my will has objectivity, as long as it is not actual I feel a deficiency. In this sense I stand above my merely subjective will:

If that which is deficient does not at the same time stand above its deficiency, then its deficiency does not exist for it. For us an animal is deficient, but not for itself. In so far as an end is still only ours, it is for us a deficiency, for to us, freedom and will are the unity of the subjective and the objective. Hence the end must be posited objectively, and it thereby attains not a new one-sided determination but only its realization (PR, §8 A).

The convergence of freedom and necessity is at the heart of Hegel's idea that, as noted earlier, the family is not an external mechanism. Hegel expresses this in positive terms by describing the family as an ethical 'substance.' This is not simply a metaphor, nor is it some mysterious entity. If the above analysis is correct, then husband and wife are distinct persons and yet are not simply opposed to each other: each, in willing the good of the family through particular actions wills his/her own good, since each sees the objective good as his/her subjective good. The objectivity of this good means that each shares in a properly universal will, not merely a common will as found in the chance agreement of subjective wills which are involved in the contract of abstract right.⁵⁹⁷ When husband and wife effectively establish the good of the whole, then their shared universal will is embodied in the life of the family as a whole (as a unified activity). But such an embodiment is what 'substance' is. Substance is not a 'thing.' It is an activity. And this is as true of the individual person as it is of the family. The family is thereby a 'spiritual' unity because, to use Hegel's terminology, particularity is restored to universality.⁵⁹⁸ The distinct actions of family life are united as a common project of the actualization of freedom. They *are* what they are as part of this project.

Some of Hegel's comments about the family as substance can easily mislead us about his meaning, such as the following: "Since the determinations of ethics constitute the concept of

597. PR, §75 and R.

598. PR, §161. The institution of the family as a unified activity is then actual in Hegel's technical sense, as are its members.

freedom, they are the substantiality or universal essence of individuals, who are related to them merely as accidents."⁵⁹⁹ By 'accident' Hegel does not mean 'incidental' nor does he mean 'mere part' of a whole. We must take comments such as this in light of ones such as the following: subjectivity "is the ground in which the concept of freedom has its existence,"⁶⁰⁰ and "substance is essentially the relation of accidents to itself."⁶⁰¹ The wills of husband and wife do not play the role of parts in the purposes of some further distinct universal will. The universal will is the will of each. We are tempted to think that either the husband and wife are substances or the family (as strange as it may seem) is a substance, but not both. But Hegel insists that insofar as the universal will is both objective and subjective we *can* have both. This is, I think, what he is referring to when he says in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* that "the experience of what Spirit is" is the experience of "this absolute substance which is the unity of the different independent self-consciousnesses which, in their opposition, enjoy perfect freedom and independence: 'I' that is 'We' and 'We' that is 'I'."⁶⁰² It is because the family has this structure that "the disposition [appropriate to the family] is to have self-consciousness of one's individuality *within this unity* as essentiality which has being in and for itself, so that one is present in it not as an independent person [*eine Person für sich*] but as a *member*."⁶⁰³ The 'member' of the family is not like the

599. PR, §145 A.

600. PR, §152 R.

601. PR, §163.

602. PhG, §177. For a similar expression of this difficult thought cf. PhG, §349. The introductory paragraphs (§347-359) of the section "The Actualization of Rational Self-consciousness through its own Activity," where ethical substance is introduced, are helpful when read in conjunction with PR.

603. PR, §158.

‘member’ of a street gang. The latter is a member in the sense of giving up his own particular identity in exchange for one which is parasitic on that of the gang. Hence this is lost with the dissolution of the gang. The member of the family has a mediated self-identity which can withstand the natural dissolution of the family, because the good of the whole is achieved by ensuring the good of each member. Individuality is not lost in membership.⁶⁰⁴ This is a misleading way of putting the point, though, for it assumes that there is individuality independent of membership. Hegel wishes to argue not only that the family is the actualization of freedom, but that it is necessary to this actualization. This is not at all obvious. Within the institution of the family I develop an identity as a spouse and parent. Living up to my duties is both formative of this identity and its fulfillment. As a child the family serves to develop my personality and is therefore a condition of my later independence as a mature adult. But Hegel is saying more than this. It is somehow necessary that I have *this* identity (of parent and spouse or child), as it is *not* necessary that I develop the identity of, say, a member of a fly-fishing club. What is distinctive about the family (and Hegel will later argue, the state) as an ethical institution is that it embodies the universal will. My identity as a member of the family is necessary to my essence as free. I think what is central to Hegel’s idea here is that outside of the institution of the family one could not have the same kind of care for the particularity of each individual and consequently of the recognition of this care. There are two aspects to this. 1) In the family it is the *whole* person that

604. This might seem to be incompatible with my earlier point that in love the whole self is given. But we must keep in mind that love is only actual in the reciprocal relation of giving the whole self to the other. Through this process each finds his/her identity as given back by the other.

is cared for and 2) this caring is necessary as a duty (it is essential to the family as ethical), it is not left to chance. One may be the recipient of particular acts of benevolence from non-family members, but these do not have the above characteristics. Other institutions (except the state) administer to specific aspects of our being, but not our whole being. It is because our integrity as an individual is acknowledged and provided for that our identity is found (in the case of parent) or formed (in the case of child) within the reciprocal relations which make up the family's life. Hegel takes this finding of our identity in membership which is at the same time a ground of our particularity and a source of our recognition of this particularity to be a peculiarly modern accomplishment.⁶⁰⁵

The affective mode of apprehending that our identity is found or formed as a member is contained in the emotional disposition of trust. Trust, in Hegel's specific technical sense, is not just any unquestioning attachment, it is a disposition which is only possible within an ethical community. The analogue of this feeling in the state is patriotism (which, in Hegel's use of the term, includes the citizen's feeling of security) of which Hegel says it is "a consequence of the institutions within the state, a consequence in which rationality is *actually* present ... if we take this *disposition* to be something which can originate independently [*für sich*] and arise out of subjective representations [*Vorstellungen*] and thoughts, we are confusing it with opinion; for in

605. "The right of the subject's *particularity* to find satisfaction, or - to put it differently - the right of *subjective freedom*, is the pivotal and focal point in the difference between *antiquity* and the *modern* age. This right, in its infinity, is expressed in Christianity, and it has become the universal and actual principle of a new form of the world. Its more specific shapes include love ..." (PR, §124 R).

this interpretation, it is deprived of its true ground, i.e. objective reality."⁶⁰⁶ Trust is an immediate form in which we know (and live) our freedom.⁶⁰⁷ As such it has both a subjective and an objective side. This is why, for Hegel, trust (as also love) cannot really exist outside of ethical institutions. The following is Hegel's description of what trust is in the context of the state, but it applies equally to the trust which exists in the family:

[trust is] the consciousness that my substantial and particular interest is preserved and contained in the interest and end of an other (in this case, the state), and in the latter's relation to me as an individual [*als Einzelnem*]. As a result, this other immediately ceases to be an other for me, and in my consciousness of this, I am free.⁶⁰⁸

Hegel argues that in love and trust we 'immediately' possess and know our freedom. He also refers to the family as a 'natural' community.⁶⁰⁹ We must be careful not to misconstrue what he means by these terms. He is making a distinction about the *form* in which we possess and know our freedom. Hence he can say without contradiction with the above that "although the Family is *immediately* determined as an ethical being, it is within itself an *ethical* entity only so far as it is not the *natural* relationship of its members, or so far as their connection is an *immediate* connection of separate, actual individuals; for the ethical principle is intrinsically

606. PR, §268 and R.

607. In Hegel's account 'love' is the effectively willed activity of reciprocal relations which is the institution of the family, and hence it is the immediate way in which we possess our freedom. 'Trust' in distinction to this is the immediate way in which we know we are free.

608. PR, §268.

609. PhG, §450.

universal, and this natural relationship is just as much a spiritual one, and *it is only as a spiritual entity that it is ethical*.”⁶¹⁰ Hegel uses ‘natural’ and ‘immediate’ in two senses: as what is given or biological, and as what is emotive rather than cognitive.⁶¹¹ In the former sense they are opposed to the spiritual (though capable of being transformed),⁶¹² in the second sense the immediate and the natural are already spiritual.

The distinction between how we possess our freedom in the family *versus* in the state has some parallel with the distinction between how we possess the truth in religion *versus* in the state according to Hegel. Religion “has the truth as its universal object [*Gegenstand*], but as a *given* content whose basic determinations have not been recognized in terms of concepts and thought”

610. PhG, §451, final italics mine.

611. Stafford discusses a similar point in Heidi Ravven's interpretation of Hegel. Ravven criticizes Mills for not taking account of these different senses (A. M. Stafford, 'The Feminist Critique of Hegel on Women and the Family,' *Animus* 2 (1997), 79).

Cf. PR, §§161-4 for 'natural' used in the sense of the biological or given. For example: "The *ethical* aspect of marriage consists in the consciousness of this union as a substantial end, and hence as love, trust, and the sharing of the whole of individual existence [*Existenz*]. When this disposition and actuality are present, the natural drive is reduced to the modality of a moment of nature which is destined to be extinguished in its very satisfaction, while the spiritual bond asserts *its rights* as the substantial factor and thereby stands out as indissoluble *in itself* and exalted above the contingency of the passions and of particular caprice" (§163). Also cf. PR, §174: "One of the chief moments in a child's upbringing is discipline, the purpose of which is to break the child's self-will in order to eradicate the merely sensuous and natural." But cf. PR, §158 A for 'natural' used in the ethical or spiritual sense designating what is grasped emotively rather than cognitively: "love means in general the consciousness of my unity with another, ... But love is a feeling [*Empfindung*], that is, ethical life in its natural form."

612. In marriage the "moment of natural vitality" is "transformed into a spiritual union, into self-conscious love" (PR, §161).

whereas “the state possesses *knowledge*. Within its principle, the content is no longer essentially confined to the form of feeling and faith, but belongs to determinate thought.”⁶¹³ Without ethical objectivity there can be no trust as without truth there can be no faith, only opinion. We must, therefore, be careful not to assume that awareness through feeling is either contrary to reason or that it is a-rational. That we possess our freedom emotively in the family is, however, a limitation of the family, and is one reason for its dependence on the state, in which there is an independence and stability in self-conscious knowledge. This is embodied in its laws without which there could be no ethical family.

IV.4 Response to Some Concerns About Hegel's Account of the family

I have attempted a sympathetic reading of Hegel's idea that the family is ‘ethical’ and an ‘institution’ in his specific senses of these terms - that it is the actualization of freedom.⁶¹⁴ But as I noted at the beginning of this paper, there are serious obstacles to seeing the force of his argument. It can seem that Hegel is merely grasping for a defense of the *status quo*, and a *status quo* which in retrospect we think is obviously not the embodiment of freedom, especially for women. Hegel does take for granted his culture's division of labour for the sexes between the

613. PR, §270 R.

614. Hegel's technical use of such terms can seem frustratingly idiosyncratic, but it would be truer to the spirit of Hegel's account not to say that Hegel has a peculiar use of these terms (as also of 'love,' 'trust,' 'idea,' 'concept,' 'freedom,' 'existence,' 'actual,' etc.), but rather that he articulates the truth that has been implicit in their use. He does not so much create a new vocabulary as transform an existing one in order to bring out its truth.

private and public realms. This is a source of inequality between men and women in civil society and the state, and it is commonly assumed that this inequality is likewise present in Hegel's account of the family. Further, or as part of this, it can easily appear that he leaves women in the realm of first nature, reserving the development of a second nature to men. And this can appear to be the result of an argument from biological determinism in support of an institution which is oppressive, not ethical. If this is so his account of freedom is seriously flawed and presents only the freedom (or the appearance of freedom) of men, or worse, of men at the expense of women.

It is important to see what is wrong in these interpretations of Hegel while at the same time acknowledging and clarifying the limitation of his account. Hegel is giving an account of the *Idea* of the family, in his technical sense of the term 'Idea,' meaning what is the actualization of the Concept.⁶¹⁵ Hegel is often more explicit about this in his discussion of ethical life in the

615. I here follow the convention of capitalizing some Hegelian terms. In order to explain this interpretive decision, I will expand on what I have already said in chapter two concerning this issue. Contrary to what has become a commonplace aside by many recent Hegelian commentators, I think there is no obviously correct way in which to translate some philosophically rich German nouns in Hegel's texts into English with respect to capitalization. There is philosophical nuance involved in capitalizing and also in not capitalizing, and one must rely on one's interpretation of Hegel's philosophical system in order to choose which nuance to accept. It is true to say that when translators capitalize 'Concept' etc. the English reader may be misled, because a distinction in English between 'concept' and 'Concept' appears, which is not present in the German, since all nouns are capitalized in German. But it is equally true that in translating German nouns without capitalization an important ambiguity naturally present in German is lost, and so such a translation strategy can also be misleading. Because all nouns in German are capitalized, capitalization does not differentiate between subjects and abstract nouns. A central idea in Hegel, expressed in his preface to the PhG, is that the truth is both substance and subject

section of *The Philosophy of Right* devoted to the state than he is in earlier sections. Here he clearly distinguishes between states which (merely) exist in the world and the Idea of the state:

In considering the Idea of the state, we must not have any particular states or particular institutions in mind; instead, we should consider the Idea, this actual God, in its own right.⁶¹⁶

Thus he can criticize states: “A bad state, of course, is purely secular and finite, but the rational state is infinite within itself,”⁶¹⁷ and again “A bad state is one which merely exists.”⁶¹⁸ A specific example is his criticism of England’s common law tradition as lacking in rationality.⁶¹⁹ Clearly Hegel’s interest is not simply to affirm what exists. But his refusal to predict the future or to make specific demands on it (by presenting a novel political philosophy as a goal or utopia) may obscure for us the fact that he *is* making a critical judgement of the present. He *does* affirm a

("In my view, which can be justified only by the exposition of the system itself, everything turns on grasping and expressing the True, not only as *Substance*, but equally as *Subject*" PhG, §17). The ambiguity in German fits this idea nicely. Hence those who give a metaphysical reading of Hegel are more likely to retain capitalization. (A different reason for retaining the capitalization of nouns in translation is the belief that Hegel's terms are too far removed from our normal understanding of them and so should be tagged in some way. This is, I think, mistaken.) Those who give a non-metaphysical interpretation, especially those who read Hegel as engaged in a form of category theory, following Klaus Hartmann, will naturally not capitalize nouns in translation. For a nice introduction to the latter tradition of interpretation see the introduction to *Hegel Reconsidered*, eds. H. Tristram Engelhardt and Terry Pinkard (Boston: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1994) and Klaus Hartmann's influential paper 'Hegel: A Non-Metaphysical View' in Alasdair MacIntyre, ed., *Hegel: a collection of Critical Essays* (Notre Dame: Univ. of Notre Dame Press, 1976).

616. PR, §258.

617. PR, §270 A.

618. PR, §270 A.

619. Cf. PR, §211 R and A, §225 R.

demand regarding the future but this remains at the most abstract level: that it be sufficient to the Concept (freedom). Hegel's justification of the present takes the form of seeing how it is rational, which means that to the extent that it is not rational it is lacking any justification.

Hegel's discussion of the family makes it clear that he does not simply accept its present shape as absolute. The most striking aspect of this discussion is the equality of husband and wife in it. Equality is essential to Hegel's idea of freedom as necessarily mediated freedom. In the *Phenomenology of Spirit* the master-slave relation is not a stable one. It is not ultimately satisfying on either side, for the demand for recognition requires recognition by one who is free like oneself. Love is "the ethical moment in marriage."⁶²⁰ It is not simply the physical attraction between two people:

The first moment in love is that I do not wish to be an independent person in my own right [*für mich*] and that, if I were, I would feel deficient and incomplete. The second moment is that I find myself in another person, that I gain recognition in this person [*daß ich in ihr gelte*], who in turn gains recognition in me.⁶²¹

If the relation between husband and wife were not one of equality within the family, then neither could find him/herself in the other, hence *neither* would be free.

The equality within marriage can be obscured by the designation of the husband as

620. PR, §180 R.

621. PR, §158 A, cf. also §161 A.

“head” in representing the family as a legal person in its external relations.⁶²² But Hegel is explicit that this is a position in civil society and the state, not one within the family. The husband must necessarily take this role because only he is a member of these other institutions. The exclusion of women from civil society and the state is the real locus of the inequality of men and women in Hegel’s account of ethical life. In retrospect he would surely say that his thinking was fettered by an abstraction in this regard, an abstraction which we have been freed from, not by a more lucid introspection or a more rigorous a priori thinking (which would have been equally available to Hegel), but as a result of our fuller cultural development and retrospective philosophical reflection on it. As part of that retrospective reflection, it might be argued that the exclusion of women from civil society and the state makes it difficult or even impossible for women to be fully equal within the family itself. If this is the case, then it reveals an important limitation of Hegel’s account of the family: equality is essential to that account (and Hegel has seen this), but Hegel has not fully understood the *conditions* necessary for it.⁶²³ However, if we conclude from the inequality of women and men in civil society and the state that women are oppressed *qua* member of the family in Hegel’s account, then we are revealing our own devaluation of the family and its members, not Hegel’s. When marriage is viewed as a contract then this is a natural conclusion to draw, for marriage is then really just one part of civil society, and this is a society in Hegel’s day in which the parties in this contract are not on an equal

622. PR, §170.

623. It should be noted that for us to more fully understand the inter-relations between the family, civil society, and the state in the light of the actualization of freedom is congenial to the spirit of Hegel’s immanent critique, not contrary to it.

footing. But Hegel is emphatic that such a view of marriage debases it.⁶²⁴ The giving of the whole self in love makes a crucial difference between Hegel's account and a contractual view of marriage. It is on this basis that the family is 'one person,' a substantial unity in which husband and wife share a truly universal will. Without a love which is actual the unity of the family would be oppressive, as in the externally imposed unity of political tyranny. This is why Hegel allows for divorce. To protect the family members from caprice, he argues that divorce should be difficult, but when the state determines that love is, objectively, not present, then it can dissolve the marriage since it is no longer an ethical bond.⁶²⁵

The presence of a universal will entails that the husband's external role as representing the family to civil society and the state is a duty produced by love, not a matter of privilege. It also explains Hegel's insistence that property be held in common. In his view, property is not an end in itself, and it should not be a source of difference between family members. If it *is*, the difference is arbitrary and so incompatible with the freedom of the members. Difference *per se* is not unethical, for it can be the result of the articulation of the universal will. But where difference is arbitrary it can be a source of inequality. Hence Hegel's criticism of English inheritance laws which give preference to the eldest son, not for some rational purpose, but out of a vain attachment to its abstract idea of the family name.⁶²⁶ The demand that there be no

624. PR, §161 A.

625. PR, §163 A.

626. PR, §180.

arbitrary differences between family members partly motivates Hegel's criticism of cultures in which the nuclear family is not given precedence over blood ties.⁶²⁷ If my primary attachment is to my kin, then my attachment to my family is conditional. In a conflict of goods my kin would win out. This means that I have not given my whole self to my spouse and the embodiment of a universal will in the life of the family is not possible. A contingent difference in origins determines my will, not the objective good of the family.

It has been suggested by some critics of Hegel that in his account woman remains in her first nature while man develops a second nature. For example, Patricia Mills writes:

The process of mutual recognition in the Hegelian schema necessarily excludes woman. Hegel believes nature has assigned woman to the family, the sphere of first nature, and he keeps her imprisoned there on nature's behalf. Whereas man finds a self-conscious reality or second nature in community, woman remains in the sphere of immediate biological life.⁶²⁸

There are certainly some passages in Hegel's texts which appear to support such an interpretation (I will turn to these in a moment) but it is crucial to recognize that Hegel understands the family itself to be a community. It is not in the realm of instinctual biological life as is the mating of animals.⁶²⁹ Because of this, education (*Bildung*) is necessary for individuals, both male and

627. Cf. PR, §172 and A, and also §180.

628. Patricia J. Mills, *Woman, Nature and Psyche* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), 12.

629. Hegel's view of the family as spiritual, that is, as an ethical community, can be obscured by his use of 'natural' and 'immediate' for the non-cognitive grasp of our freedom, as discussed

female, to be capable of participating in the family. *Both* man and woman then must develop a second nature:

Education [*Pädagogik*] is the art of making human beings ethical: it considers them as natural beings and shows them how they can be reborn, and how their original nature can be transformed into a second, spiritual nature so that spirituality becomes *habitual* to them.⁶³⁰

Children must first be educated to possess the ethical in the form of feeling. As noted earlier this expresses itself in love, trust and obedience, for they feel that their good is not other than that of the family's and that their parents will this good. They must also be educated to be self-sufficient, free persons so that they have the capacity to leave the family and start their own.⁶³¹

If it is necessary for women, no less than men, to develop a second nature, what are we to make of the remark that “The difference between man and woman is the difference between animal and plant?” Taken out of context this certainly appears to be a misogynist comment (even in context!). However, I think it is properly interpreted as being a metaphor for the contrast between how the universal is present in a person *qua* citizen and how it is present in a person *qua* family member (that is, how the objective good is present in the subjective will of citizen and family member). It should be noted that this metaphor appears in the *addition* to

above.

630. PR, §151 A.

631. PR, §175.

§166, that is, in one of Hegel's off-the-cuff lecture extrapolations. I am not suggesting as a general rule that such additions should be taken lightly, but the standard of precision which we demand of Hegel in them is reasonably lower than in the main published text. In this instance one must question the adequacy of the metaphor to Hegel's considered exposition of the nature of love. Hegel takes neither plants nor animals to be self-conscious, free and so capable of 'action' in the strict sense. Earlier in the *Philosophy of Right*, in contrast to the freedom (and consequent responsibility) essential to (and constitutive of) human action, Hegel has presented animals as being determined by their given desires (moved by instinct) and this is taken to mean that they are moved externally rather than being self-determined.⁶³² As the addition to §166 makes clear, the contrast between plant and animal focuses on the contrast between passivity and activity. I think the most charitable way in which to interpret this, given the larger context of Hegel's account of the family, is that it is attempting to draw a parallel between the 'passive' and the immediate on the one hand, and the 'active' and the *self-consciously* active on the other. Hegel has not argued that love is passive, that it is a passion which overwhelms us. On the contrary, he has presented it as an activity, and an activity which demands reciprocity between lovers. It is a form of self-determination, but one which is 'immediate,' which is to say felt (both in the willing of it and in the possession of its result) rather than self-consciously cognized. Hegel only speaks of women as literally passive in *external* relations (that is, with respect to civil society).⁶³³ This says no more than that women are not direct, active members of civil society. I am not trying to

632. PR, §132 R, on what an action is cf. §§113, 117, and 124.

633. PR, §166.

defend or in any way to salvage Hegel's acceptance of that social limitation of his day. My concern is that this not cloud our understanding of the view Hegel develops of the family as its own distinctive ethical sphere in which men and women have a 'passive,' i.e. immediate, possession of their freedom.

Hegel *does* accept a limitation of woman's vocation to the ethical institution of the family, unlike men. But this asymmetry between the vocations of the sexes is not present *within* the institution of the family itself. The contrast Hegel presents is not that woman has an instinctual attachment to the family while man has a self-consciously rational relation to it. He argues that *both* wife and husband know and will the institution, and hence sustain it in their actions, in and through their love.⁶³⁴ The contrast Hegel makes in the plant/animal metaphor is between the relation an individual has to the family and the relation an individual has to civil society and the state. This is obscured by Hegel's acceptance that only men can instantiate the latter role.

634. In Hegel's account, both men and women have a vocation to membership in the family. What, in retrospect, we can see as limited in Hegel's larger account is that he does not see women as also having a vocation to civil society and to self-consciously active membership in the state. But we should not let this obscure our understanding of his specific account of the family. Hegel argues that the three spheres of family, civil society and state, though ultimately inter-related, are distinct, each having its own integrity. My focus has been on what is distinctive in the family and I have been arguing that in this sphere men and women are necessarily equal (not necessarily in any 'existing' family, but in the 'Idea' of the family). That equality will be obscured if we collapse the spheres of family and civil society, in particular, if we reduce the relations of the family to being a sub-set of the relations of civil society.

Hegel contrasts the mediated self-identity of woman *as a family member* and the mediated self-identity of man *as engaged in civil society and as citizen* as follows:

The *one* [sex] is therefore spirituality which divides itself up into personal self-sufficiency with being *for itself* and the knowledge and volition of *free universality*, i.e. into the self-consciousness of conceptual thought and the volition of the objective and ultimate end. And the *other* is spirituality which maintains itself in unity [*Einigkeit*] as knowledge and volition of the substantial in the form of concrete *individuality* [*Einzelheit*] and feeling [*Empfindung*].⁶³⁵

Hegel speaks of the latter as “passive and subjective” and the former as “powerful and active.”

But when he refers to man *within* the family he gives the same account of man's sense of self as he gives for woman: “In the family, he [man] has a peaceful intuition of this unity [of his self], and an emotive [*empfindend*] and subjective ethical life.”⁶³⁶ The essential point for Hegel's philosophical account is the difference in form of our mediated self-identity in the family and in public life. This is not a difference grounded in sexual difference. It is grounded in the difference between kinds of community.⁶³⁷

In the feeling of love there is a grasp of the unity between subjective and objective, even though this is not *understood* self-consciously. It is only because of this that love is ethical: “the

635. PR, §166.

636. PR, §166. The unity referred to is the “self-standing unity with himself” (“*die selbständige Einigkeit mit sich*”) which Hegel thinks one must achieve by overcoming division from others and oneself in public life, but which one possesses immediately in family life.

637. This is of course obscured by Hegel's acceptance of the lack of full participation of women in the communities of civil society and the state in his day.

identity - which is accordingly *concrete* - of the good and the subjective will, the truth of them both, is *ethical life*."⁶³⁸ Hegel speaks of the law of emotive and subjective substantiality as "piety."⁶³⁹ He invokes this religious language because he sees love as neither irrational nor a-rational, but rather as implicitly rational. In Sophocles' *Antigone* Hegel sees piety presented as "the law of the ancient gods and of the cthonic realm [*des Unterirdischen*] as an eternal law of which no one knows whence it came."⁶⁴⁰ Antigone is not a pathetic character (in the modern sense of pathetic), she is a tragic character. Only great characters can be tragic. What brings destruction upon the tragic character is that she knows and wills something which *is* good, but is a finite good willed as if it were the whole good. Because woman's vocation is thought by Hegel to be specifically tied to the family, piety is referred to as the "law of woman"⁶⁴¹ but this does not mean it is not the law of man *qua* family member. Antigone is not a transhistorical ideal for woman⁶⁴² (*versus* man) but an image of the claims of the family (felt by both man and woman) in relation to the state. Hegel thinks that for the ancients this relation was one of an unresolved conflict between two goods, while for moderns a resolution is possible. The modern state does not reject the substantial ethical life (the good) of the family, but it also does not assert this as fully substantial (as actual in independence from the state). Rather, the state is the ground of the family: it makes possible and actively promotes the objective life of the family through its laws

638. PR, §141.

639. PR, §166.

640. PR, §166 R. Piety is an 'eternal law' since rational, and of 'unknown origin' since implicit.

641. PR, §166.

642. Cf. Stafford, 71, for a discussion of interpreting the figure of Antigone as a transhistorical ideal.

which enable a subjective will to take on a stable and external form, such that the unity of subjective and objective is achieved as the institution of marriage. In allowing for the creation, recognition, and protection of the family, the laws of the state are similar to the way in which the material world enables the will of the person to embody itself in the world, and the way in which legal property rights recognize and protect this embodiment of the will.⁶⁴³ The claims of the family, though rational, are *felt* by Antigone, as they are by husband and wife. This is why Hegel speaks of the family as the *immediate* form of ethical life. And it is why, for Antigone, they are “an eternal law of which no one knows whence it came.”⁶⁴⁴ I think that Hegel’s likening of woman (and, as I have argued, man *qua* family member) to a plant is meant to draw our attention to the implicity of the universal in the concrete life of the family. Just as plants are not conscious of the principle of their structure (of being a life), so family members (*qua* family members) do not have a cognitive grasp of freedom as the principle of the family, of the family as the actualization of freedom.

The limitation of the vocation of women in Hegel’s account does not render the *family* in that account an oppressive institution, nor does it entail that women remain in a ‘first nature,’ left

643. The modern accomplishment is prefigured in Aeschylus’ *Eumenides* where the furies, protectors of the blood relation of the family to the exclusion of all other goods, are, by the wisdom of Athena (as embodied in the vote of the assembly of Athens), accepted and given a home within the city. (Athena votes with the jurors, she is not above the process but part of it, that is, the divine is seen to be present within the activity of the state) (Aeschylus, *The Eumenides*, trans. R. Lattimore (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1991), Lines 681 -754).

644. PR, §166 R.

behind by male civilization. But in retrospect we can see that the institutions of civil society and the state are oppressive in their exclusion of women, in the sense that any existence which is less than the fully determinate actualization of freedom is oppressive. That we find Hegel's account disconcerting here is evidence that the subjective demand for freedom, which includes the demand that our world be justified to us, is present. This is a testament to Hegel's general argument, not evidence that there is something essentially wrong with it. It is an instance of immanent critique which is the dialectic in action. We will find it difficult to realize this if we mistake the immanent teleology of Hegel's view with what we might term an *a priori* approach, as distinct from an *a posteriori* one. When we think of 'working out what is rational' we often think in terms of mathematical logic, or of innate ideas or dispositions. Hegel is not an *a priori* thinker in this sense. If he were, the owl of Minerva would not have to wait until dusk to take flight.⁶⁴⁵ Because Hegel does not discount the empirical, he is open to discovery regarding the distinction between the sexes (or even within the same sex).⁶⁴⁶ What he *would* demand, however,

645. PR, Preface, p. 23.

646. The openness to new discoveries is the other side of the coin of Hegel's claim that philosophy is its own time grasped in thought (PR, Preface, 23), unless history has come to an end. Shlomo Avineri argues correctly, I think, that Hegel does not think history has come to an end, and that consequently Hegel is more critical of his present time than might at first be apparent:

If philosophy is then nothing else than its own time apprehended in thought, then there is a curious corollary to it: if a philosopher can only comprehend that which is, then the very fact that he has comprehended his historical actuality is evidence that a form of life has already grown old, since only the fully developed can be philosophically comprehended. Thus below the surface of the apparent passivity of Hegel's statement, a basically critical theory can

is a rational justification of what is claimed to be a discovery (in his technical sense the discovery, to be significant, must be shown to be a necessary determination of the Concept, that is, of freedom). He would argue that an adequate criticism of his account of civil society and the state cannot be made based on a merely abstract idea (a 'representation' in his technical sense) of freedom. Such an idea is unrealizable (as it stands on its own) and so an attachment to it can only be made dogmatically, by taking as given one aspect of the freedom Hegel sees as hard-won through a long historical process.⁶⁴⁷

A better (more fully rational) understanding of civil society and the state will, of course, affect our understanding of the family, since the family necessarily has external relations and so one or more of its members must be active in distinct realms. When both sexes are capable of pursuing an active role in each of the three ethical institutions then the differentiation of roles within the family is to a greater extent the result of choice. What enables that choice to be substantial and not capricious is that it is part of the life of an ethical institution. This would be a welcome development in Hegel's eyes, I think, for it allows for the recognition of the unity of

be discerned (*Hegel's Theory of the Modern State*, 128).

For a good discussion of questions concerning the relation between history and philosophy and whether Hegel is quietistic or critical, see Avineri's chapter 6: "The Owl of Minerva and the critical mind," in *Hegel's Theory of the Modern State*.

647. If Hegel is right about the nature of freedom, then an adequate criticism of his account of civil society and the state would need to show how his account does not capture the full actuality of freedom, rather than criticizing it as running afoul of an abstract conception of freedom which on its own cannot be actual.

our will and an objective principle in these determinations of our life. In a similar vein Hegel argues that it is better that a man and woman will to be united in one life prior to discovering intimacy and having a shared experience. Hegel's concern is that with the reverse order there is the danger that marriage will be mistaken as an inessential extra to an otherwise substantial relation (that a merely subjective will will be mistaken as already united with objectivity).

Hegel's account of the family does not preclude other kinds of discoveries. For instance, he is critical of practices of child rearing which focus on playfulness. It might be found that the facts of the matter are not as he supposes (or that these 'facts' have changed with changing social conditions) so that we think a focus on play leads in later life to greater confidence and independence. If so, then on Hegel's own grounds we would have to revise this particular idea about the education of children.

On a more general note, Hegel clearly argues that social life is known, willed and made actual through human beings. It is objective, but this is not an objectivity which is present in the universe independent of us.⁶⁴⁸ This is what enables social life to develop. We demand satisfaction and hence are always judging the present social expression of the Concept (judging whether it is an adequate condition of and positively achieves our freedom). We must, therefore,

648. "Ethical life is the *Idea of freedom* as the living good which has its knowledge and volition in self-consciousness, and its actuality through self-conscious action" (PR, §142). The objective life of an ethical institution may be independent of one particular person's capricious will, but it is not human-independent, and it is not in truth independent from that person's will to be free.

be careful not to misread Hegel as claiming that this social life is simply determined by factors of biology as in Mills' criticism. For Hegel, what has to be is what is rational.⁶⁴⁹ Hegel is at pains to work out the specific determinations of this. He may be mistaken in judgements about them, or limited by his historical situation. In particular, on some points he might have mistaken the merely existent for the actual. It is important, however, not to confuse this kind of limitation with an essential fault in his project of justifying the family as an ethical institution.

649. Philosophy comprehends the unity of necessity and freedom (where this is the inner necessity of the Concept, not the external determinism of the natural order - a determinism which Hegel links to chance): the "ethical determinations are necessary relations" (PR, §148 R) yet "ethical life is the *Idea of freedom* as the living good" which has "its actuality through self-conscious action" (PR, §142). Without the free willing of them, the determinations of the ethical which are 'necessary' remain merely an abstract good, hence Hegel claims that the "objective sphere of ethics, which takes the place of the abstract good, is substance made *concrete* by subjectivity *as infinite form*" (that is, *as free*) (PR, §144).

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